SHADOWS ON THE WALL

TALES OF YORK STATE

by

ARCH MERRILL

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This is Arch Merrill's eleventh book. SHADOWS ON THE WALL is a compilation of tales about unusual people, events—and even buildings—which have cast strange shadows on the wall of York State time.

Storyteller Merrill is at his best when he recounts the lore and legends he has gathered from many corners of this Upstate country.

These new tales of York State are written in the vein of his earlier popular UPSTATE ECHOES. In the pages of this book you will encounter such fabulous characters as Niagara County's Seven Sutherland Sisters with the longest hair in the world: Rochester's Rattlesnake Pete whose curious museum was known in many lands and Rulloff, the scholarly "Fiend of the Finger Lakes."

You will meet a family of daredevils parachuting from the skies, some Mormon exiles and the mysterious bars one of them put on his windows, a Rebel Spy in the "enemy country" in 1865, the Congressman who was taken prisoner at Bull Run.

You will know Auburn's William H. Seward in his finest hour and learn about the Upstate ancestors of Britain's Winston Churchill. You will visit deserted mansions, ghost towns and a lost Utopia. You will cross the trail of Presidents and First Ladies and a people who never voted, because of their religious principles, all in one Genesee Valley town.

And believe it or not, you will read that the first jinrikisha in the world was made, not in Japan, but in a little wagon shop above Keuka Lake.

$2.00

SHADOWS ON THE WALL

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SHADOWS ON THE WALL

BY ARCH MERRILL

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Chapter 1

Lore Hunting Is Fun

"When the evening lamps are lighted," sang the poet, "shadows . . . dance upon the wall."

Strange shadows have been cast on the wall of York State time—by people and places that live on in the lore of this Upstate land because they were *different.*

For many a month I "chased" some of these York State shadows that I might catch something of their magic and mystery to put between the covers of a book. The trail took me into Central New York, into the Finger Lakes country, the rugged Southern Tier, the valley of the Genesee, the fruitful plain along Ontario's shores and the Niagara Frontier.

It was a pleasant assignment, hunting the lore of this many-sided land. It was fun talking with the people. And they were uniformly generous in sharing their treasures with this lore hunter.

They have told me the tales handed down from generation to generation and the things they knew in their youth and tired eyes have sparkled and stooped shoulders straightened in the telling. But I found that the younger folks, too, have a feeling for the traditions of their region.

I have sought out the people in their farmhouse "sitting rooms," on roomy old-fashioned verandahs along quiet village streets and amid the roar of the city traffic. Farmers in their fields and vineyards have halted their labors to give a

visiting scribe a helping hand. Busy people in their offices, shops and other places of business have been courteous and kind to the bald-headed stranger with the notepad in his hand.

My treasure hunt led me to many a cemetery. In those quiet spots much can be learned of the past, and the dates on headstones are generally correct.

The prosaic and often tedious task of wading through old histories and documents was eased by the friendliness and co-operation of the librarians—in cities, in villages and on college campuses. I also am deeply indebted to the many city, town and county historians who gave so freely of their time and effort, and to those others, who while holding no official titles, are so versed in the history and the mores of their communities.

Many hands have helped me in gathering these tales of York State and in my quest of the magic and the mystery belonging to the shadows on the wall.

In particular I would like to acknowledge the assistance given me by:

Niagara County Historian Clarence O. Lewis and Karl S. Brong of Lockport; Alderman F. Gleason and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wheeler of Keuka, the Rev. Marion P. Wheeler of Knoxville, Pa., the Rev. William Guillan of Ridgewood, N. J. and Alfred Spencer of Savona, curator of the Steuben County Historical Society; Mrs. C. Roy Curtis of Marion and Spencer L. Knapp and Mrs. Sarah T. Ziegler of Palmyra; Mrs. Margaret Kahler Bearden of Rochester; W. Glenn Norris, president of the De Witt Historical Society of Ithaca; Orleans County Historian Joseph B. Achilles; Howard B. Drake of Friendship; Henry M. Allen of Auburn; Town Historian Arthur B. Donnan of York; Mrs. Ruth Anderson of James-

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And these libraries: The Rochester Public Library, the Rush Rhees Library of the University of Rochester, the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School Library, the Cornell University Library and the Cornell Collection of Regional History, the Grosvenor Library of Buffalo and public libraries in Lockport, Jamestown, Auburn, Palmyra, Bath, Ithaca and other communities.

My thanks also go to the Cornell scientists who showed me the brain of the murderer, Rulloff, pickled in alcohol. And I would be most unappreciative if I failed to mention that three of the pictures in this book were taken by my wife, Katherine, with her venerable Kodak.

Chapter 2

The Seven Sisters

Once upon a time many years ago in a far northwestern corner of York State there lived seven young sisters.

Theirs is a Cinderella story—about seven Cinderellas who were farm drudges, not kitchen slaves.

Their mother was dead. Their father was so busy with his preaching, his pettifogging, his politicking that he left most of the farm chores for his seven sturdy young daughters.

So they grew up lank and wild, like the weeds among which they hid when strangers came too close to them and to the great flocks of turkeys they tended.

Their clothes were plain and often shabby. Of that they were ashamed. For they were shy, proud, sensitive people. But they came of good blood and when they had to leave their turkeys and their weed patch to walk down the Ridge Road to district school or church at Warren's Corners, they held their young heads high.

Each young head wore, like so many crowns of glory, the longest, thickest masses of hair ever seen in Niagara County.

Like a fairy godmother with a magic wand, those amazing tresses transformed the seven drudges into seven fairy princesses, turned their shabby clothes into silks and velvets and put furs on their backs and diamonds on their fingers. It gave them a long and gaudy ride on the golden coach of fortune in those long-gone days when they were known from

coast to coast and in foreign lands, too, as "the Seven Sutherland Sisters with the longest hair in the world."

"The Seven Sutherland Sisters"—the alliterative name once was almost a household word. Once it was shouted by barkers on the midway of "The Greatest Show on Earth." It was emblazoned on billboards in the big cities and on farm barns in the hinterlands.

Thousands saw the "Cinderellas" who once had hidden away from stranger gaze among the weeds along the Ridge. "The Seven Sisters with the longest hair in the world" posed in all their hirsute splendor in store windows and hotel lobbies all over the land, to ballyhoo the hair grower their shrewd papa had originated. Their picture was on every bottle of the hair grower the family made, sold and distributed and which in three decades brought them more than a million dollars.

Once fond mamas adjured little girls to brush and take good care of their locks so that some day they "might have hair as long and thick as that of the Seven Sutherland Sisters."

The length of the combined tresses of the seven was 36 feet and 10 inches!

The names of the septet and their birth and death dates are: Sarah, 1846–1919; Victoria, 1847–1902; Isabella, 1852–1914; Grace, 1854–1946; Naomi, 1858–1893; Mary, 1861–1939; Dora, 1864–1926.

Victoria's queenly mane was the longest. It measured an even 7 feet. Then came Isabella and Mary with 6 feet of hair each. Naomi's score was 5 feet, 4 inches; Grace's 5 feet and Dora's 4½ feet. Sarah's hair was a mere yard long but she was the shortest of the lot. Most of the sisters were

"brownettes." Grace's hair remained raven to the last. Some said she dyed it.

When the hair tonic dollars were pouring in, the sisters built on the family farm along the Ridge, 5 miles northwest of Lockport, a mansion with turrets, peaked gables, fancy grill work and all the other Victorian geegaws. It was the showplace of the countryside. There the sisters came to rest from their tours. There their way of life, clannishly aloof from their neighbors, was so fantastic that it has never been forgotten.

But finally the stroke of midnight came for the surviving Cinderellas. Hard times came knocking at the door of the big house. The gingerbread mansion went up in flames in 1938. By that time no Sutherlands were living there. The fortune built on hair tonic and long tresses had slipped away, too. The craze for bobbed hair in the wake of the first World War and the family's extravagant, spendthrift ways combined to dam the golden flood.

The last of the sisters died in 1946—in penury. Another spent some of her last days in a county home.

Today a bottle of "Seven Sutherland Sisters Hair Grower" or of any of their several other preparations is a collector's item. Only a generation whose own hair is gray remembers the long-haired seven. But up around Lockport, the brisk and comely "City of the Locks" and in the lush fruit belt that surrounds it, they have become a legend.

* * *

They came from pioneer Yankee stock. Once it was claimed they were kin to the English Duke of Sutherland but that was likely press agent stuff.

Their grandfather, Andrew Sutherland, came from Ver-

mont in 1810 to settle in the dark woods along the Ridge Road in what is now the Town of Cambria. There he raised a log house on the spot where 83 years later his granddaughters built their mansion. Andrew Sutherland was a colonel of militia in the War of 1812, a war which was brought right to his very door when the British and Indians burned Lewiston and stormed down the Ridge.

His son, Fletcher, stayed on the place and in time built a frame house to replace the log cabin. He was a versatile fellow with the gift of gab. He preached around the countryside without ever holding a permanent charge. He sometimes appeared as a pleader in peace justices' courts without ever having been admitted to the bar.

He was interested in politics and was prominent in the Democratic party during the reign of James Buchanan. During the Civil War he was anti-administration Democrat. His neighbors called him a Copperhead.

Those neighbors who watched the seven daughters grow up with scant paternal care called him other names. As they watched the girls march down the Ridge in their patched dresses, with their schoolbooks and dinner pails, they marveled at the massive pigtails which hung down the Sutherland backs.

The family attended the brick Methodist church that still stands at the crossroads and it was discovered that the girls had good singing voices. Soon they were singing at church socials and other local affairs, their long hair attracting more attention than their songs. Gradually they overcame the shyness of their turkey-shepherding days.

They began making appearances in other Upstate communities and Naomi, the fifth daughter, was singled out for favorable comment in Albion and Rochester newspapers for

"her deep contralto voice which resembled a low bass," according to one account. Then she was only 13 years old and her hair hung down a little below her waist.

The fame of the Seven Sisters spread and they were booked for a concert tour. Some of them learned to play musical instruments to supplement their singing. People in cities far from the Ridge gaped at the remarkable locks of the girls from Lockport and did not heed too much what they sang or how they sang it.

Then came a turning point in their strange careers. They joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus. With "The Big Top," they continued their musical act. They preserved their dignity and were never treated as freaks like the bearded lady of the show.

What captivated the circus crowds was the sight of the seven tall girls, all in white, with their hair hanging down to the platform. At the climax of their act they turned their backs to the audience, revealing most effectively their great wealth of hair.

While on circus tour, Naomi met her future husband, Joseph Henry Bailey, a son of P. T. Barnum's partner. About that time Papa Sutherland hit upon his grand idea. His own once heavy head of hair was thinning, and so the story goes, he devised a concoction which not only stopped the decimation of his own locks but also grew new hair. He reputedly made his "discovery" in 1883 or 1884.

He may have conceived the idea of promoting the sale of the hair grower through exhibiting his daughters with the trailing tresses. It is more likely that the idea was that of Henry Bailey, Naomi's husband, who had been in show business.

Fletcher Sutherland lived long enough to see his dream

of great riches begin to come true. He died in 1888. That was two years after the Seven Sutherland Sisters began making and distributing their hair grower, in a modest way with a small plant and offices in New York.

Maybe the hair tonic was only, as some folks up Lockport way still insist, a mixture of rain water and alcohol with some other ingredient added to give it color.

The Seven Sisters never revealed the formula of the preparation that made them rich and famous. They literally "let their hair down" when they posed for hours in store windows all over the land, exhibiting "the longest hair in the world."

The company advertised, without qualification, that the tonic would "grow hair on bald heads" and that the hair and scalp cleaner was the "only absolute cure for dandruff."

In the center of placards extolling the merits of their products was a large picture of the Seven Sisters showing to best advantage their wealth of hair. In one corner, side by side, were two pictures of their late father. One view shows him almost entirely bald. The other pictures him with a shock of hair. His locks, it is indicated, were restored by the tonic he himself had devised.

The pictures are phony. In real life old man Sutherland was losing his hair when he originated the preparation and he never got any of it back. Nor was he ever bald. He was a hairy man with a goodly beard. Maybe the sisters' hirsute bounty came from his side of the house.

Whatever the ingredients of the Seven Sisters' hair grower it paid them off in gold. The business which began with a tiny store and plant on New York's 14th Street in 1886 grossed $90,000 the first year. In those days one dollar was 100 cents.

Soon the Seven Sutherland Sisters Corporation had branches in Philadelphia and Chicago. The trade name was registered abroad and offices were opened in Toronto, Havana, Paris and London. At one time there was a plant in Toronto, as well as the one in New York City.

Besides the hair grower, the company made and marketed a scalp cleaner, a shampoo, a hair dye (in several colors), combs and toilet articles. The 1890's were the lush years for the corporation, of which J. Henry Bailey was president. Sister Grace, an able business woman, was its secretary. Sister Dora ran the Canadian end of the business.

All seven sisters were directors and shared in the proceeds. At one time their property, including the mansion on the Ridge, was divided seven ways.

The faster the hair tonic dollars rolled in, the more lavish became the family's way of life and the more eccentric its whims.

Montford C. Holley, who has practised law in Lockport for 59 years, knew the clan well. He became treasurer of the company in 1896. He had a hard time keeping money in the corporation's till. The Sutherlands always found new ways of spending it. The shrewd, slightly-built veteran lawyer described the Sutherlands as kind-hearted, impulsive and impractical. He said the shampoo the company put out in a small flat package was "excellent." His silence on the merits of the hair grower was eloquent. I think he has a copy of the secret formula.

* * *

Even the Sutherland funerals were spectacular. Naomi Bailey was the first of the seven to go. She died at the age of 35 in Grand View on the Hudson in 1893, the year the big

house was built at Warren's Corners. She probably was the most talented of the tribe, an excellent public speaker with a good singing voice.

Old newspaper clippings relate that Naomi was buried in "an elegant shroud of white satin with her luxuriant hair falling down on either side of the casket." Five hundred people attended her funeral. Three hacks laden with expensive flowers followed the horse-drawn hearse with black plumes to Lockport's Glenwood Cemetery.

Among them was the floral tribute of the six surviving sisters, a huge wheel of white roses and sweet peas, with one broken bar symbolizing the vacant place. To add to the drama of the obsequies, tall Dora fainted in her carriage. When the Sutherlands buried their dead, they really put on a show.

After Naomi's death, her husband continued as head of the business. The aunts idolized the Bailey children, Harry, Naomi, Fletcher and Isabella Victoria, and showered presents upon them. Lawyer Holley recalled that a lot of the hair tonic dollars went that way.

Victoria died in New York in 1902. She, who had the longest hair, 7 feet, received the shortest obituary in the Lockport press. She left the homestead around 1897 after marrying a 19-year-old Warren Corners youth. She was 50 at the time. About her later life little is known, other than that she spent much of her share of the hair tonic profits on jewelry.

The most spectacular of the fabulous clan to live in the big house on the Ridge was Isabella's husband, Frederick H. Castlemaine, the "Prince Charming" of the Cinderella tale. The scion of a prominent Canadian family, he was a gaudy playboy, well-read, handsome, a crack shot and a powerful athlete. He and Isabella met in San Francisco while the

sisters were on one of their tours. The pair ran the Toronto branch at one time.

But the dashing Canadian had little taste for the dull grind of business. He spent his Summers relaxing at the Niagara County homestead and the countryside has never forgotten him.

Legends have grown up around Castlemaine's marksmanship. His favorite stunt was shooting the spokes out of passing buggy wheels. They say he once shot the clay pipe out of the mouth of an astounded Irish farmer at a county fair; that he neatly severed the string of a laundry bag a man was carrying on his back. Always he offered to pay his victims for any damage done. He could turn on so much charm that few remained offended by his pranks.

Lockport oldtimers recall how Castlemaine would stalk into the city's swank drinking place, Dan Rodenbeck's, in the old Hodge Opera House block and grandly order "drinks for the house" with the remark: "Oh, just another bottle of hair tonic."

The flamboyant Castlemaine died in 1897 from an overdose of morphine. There was another lavish funeral, with a casket of solid mahogany, hand-carved, with silver mountings and costly linings and again, great banks of flowers.

The widowed Isabella was disconsolate. She built an $8,000 marble mausoleum in Glenwood Cemetery with the name "Castlemaine" on it in large letters and there her Frederick was buried—with all his jewelry.

Two years later, either robbers or ghouls tried to break into the mausoleum. They smashed the hinges off the gate with a sledge hammer and touched off a time fuse in a vain attempt to blast away the heavy stone door.

After Castlemaine's death, Lockport folks used to see a

strange light glowing of nights in Glenwood Cemetery. It was the lovelorn Isabella who, her steps guided by lantern light, had made her way across the town to fling herself upon the tomb of her beloved.

She seemingly recovered from her grief as within a few years she took for her second husband a Niagara County resident without Castlemaine's glamor.

When Isabella departed this life in 1914 at the age of 62, her body, clad in a white robe, was embalmed and sealed in a copper-lined, glass-topped mahogany casket and kept in the mansion for nearly a month after the funeral before it was placed in the mausoleum.

Four years later came another manifestation of the family's reluctance to give up its dead. Young Fletcher Bailey, vice-president of the company, onetime head of the Havana branch and the darling of his doting aunts, was fatally injured in Buffalo while riding his new motorcycle. He was brought to the house on the Ridge and in its parlor his body rested in state in a glass-topped casket after being embalmed.

The aunts spent hours looking into the face of the dead youth. They gathered at the grand piano and sang the songs Fletcher Bailey had liked in life. It was nearly two weeks before they were persuaded to commit his body to the marble crypt in Glenwood.

* * *

There's a new house, a modern, modest one, where once stood the rococo mansion of the Seven Sutherland Sisters.

The showplace of the region, which had risen in all its Victorian elegance in 1893, in the heyday of the Seven Sisters' fame and wealth, burned to the ground early on the evening of January 24, 1938.

Only two of the sisters were living then. Seven years before the fire, Grace and Mary had been forced to leave the farm where Sutherlands had lived for 122 years. Their fortunes had gone into a tailspin, the hair tonic million had gone with the wind and for four poverty-pinched years, the last two sisters lived drably in the mansion where once all seven had lived so grandly.

It was the talk of the fruit country, that house with its 14 rooms, its seven bedrooms, one for each sister; its seven hallways, its marble bath rooms with running water, a novelty in the 1890s; its black walnut woodwork, its inlaid hardwood floors, its massive chandeliers and its three furnaces. The Sutherlands had spared no expense when they built the ornate wooden pile on the family acres they called "Sutherland Farm."

A life-size portrait of the Seven Sisters, in color and in all the splendor of their celebrated tresses, adorned the wall of the high-ceilinged living room. Once the roomy third-story attic was crammed with Saratoga trunks containing bottles of the hair grower. Expressmen at Lockport dreaded the sight of those trunks. They were inordinately heavy.

In the old days there were spacious lawns and gardens and barns and stables for the numerous Sutherland pets. The main barn, sadly needing paint, is still on the scene. The stately oak trees which once shaded the front lawn, are gone, victims of the fire.

Gone too is the tiered summerhouse where once the sisters, scantily clad and with great masses of hair piled high upon their heads under towels, sunned themselves. No trace is left of the cinder path where once the sisters rode their high-wheeled bicycles in bathing suits—to the dismay of some prissy neighbors.

The animal cemetery where their pets were buried, each in its casket with its individual name plate and each in a marked grave, long ago yielded to the plow. Others tend the gardens where once the sisters flitted about, each wearing a cloth mask to protect features and treasured tresses from the sun.

Sarah lived in the big house longer than the others. Neighbors called her "the sensible one." She was the family balance wheel. But she had her eccentricities—among them 17 pet cats.

Dora was seldom at the homestead in her later years. She ran the Canadian business and ran it well—until finally the bobbed hair fad which had wrecked the hair tonic business in the United States hit the Alberta prairies, Dora's last stand. She was killed in an automobile accident in Los Angeles in 1926. There's a yarn, probably apocryphal, that Dora's ashes, shipped from California to be placed in the family mausoleum in Lockport, were lost in transit.

Sarah, who had been wretchedly ill with dropsy for years, died in the mansion in 1919. After that the place was little occupied for eight years. Henry Bailey and his children spent some Summer vacations there.

In 1927 Grace and Mary returned to "Sutherland Farm." They used only the upstairs rooms. They had been "living around" in Lockport and Buffalo. For them there had been no Prince Charming. The gilded coach was only a pumpkin again. They were old "Cinderellas" now and there was silver in the famous tresses which still reached below their waists. But those locks had no value any more and the hair tonic fortune had gone with the wind.

Old neighbors recall the pitiful circumstances of the two surviving sisters in their last stay at the homestead. Mary was

ill. She had "strange notions," as Grace put it, and there were bars at the windows of her bedroom. She kept out of sight most of the time. Sometimes there wasn't enough to eat in the house but Grace was proud and still held her head high. She informed her neighbors she wanted no gifts of food.

Mary lived until 1939. Some of her last days were in a sanitarium, some in the Niagara County Infirmary. Grace died in Buffalo in 1946, the last of a fabulous sisterhood.

One bright afternoon when the apple blossoms were shedding their fragrance on the air, Clarence O. Lewis of Lockport, Niagara County historian who has collected a mass of data on the Seven Sutherland Sisters, drove me out to Mike Gorman's place on the McClew Road in the town of Newfane.

Michael Gorman and his wife are getting on in years but their memories of the sisters are green. From 1917 to 1919 they lived on a farm diagonally across the road from the Sutherland mansion.

In those days Sarah was the only permanent occupant of the residence. Grace and Mary were there occasionally. Gorman was hired sometimes by Sarah to drive the family carriage, usually to meet trains when one of the clan came home for a visit. He remembers when Dora landed one cold day at Lockport, wearing a muskrat coat so heavy it was hard to lift it.

Mrs. Gorman sometimes helped out at the big house, especially when Sarah had guests or there was one of the family's extraordinary funerals. She well remembers the nearly two weeks that young Fletcher Bailey was laid out in the house before his aunts would bury him.

The Gormans told of Sarah's 17 cats. The house swarmed with them. Sarah knew every one by name. One day a Gor-

man son caught one of them in a trap he had set for rats around the barns. The animal was so badly hurt it had to be shot. Mike told the boy to bury it and say nothing about the incident, hoping that Sarah would not miss that particular feline. It was an idle hope. Pronto a newspaper advertisement appeared, offering a reward for the return of the missing pet. Sarah never knew its fate.

Sister Mary was grief-stricken when a favorite horse she was boarding in a Lockport livery stable was burned to death, along with several others. The animal was 15 years old and had been raised on the farm from a colt. Its carcass was identified in the ruins of the livery by the gold-plated shoes it wore. Mary had the horse's remains hauled home. A carpenter made a casket and the horse was buried ceremoniously in the pet cemetery. Mike Gorman still has one of those horseshoes but most of the gold plating has rubbed off.

There is an undocumented tale that a pet dog belonging to one of the sisters had its own bed, one that cost $100, and that at the head of the bed was a bell which the animal rang with its paw when it wanted attention.

There is no question about the authenticity of the seven dolls. Each one belonged to and was made to represent a particular sister. The hair of each came from the head of its owner. The dolls stood nearly 3 feet high. They went with the Seven Sisters on tour and were part of the hair tonic sales ballyhoo. The maids who combed the seven magnificent heads of human hair had to take care of the seven dolls, too. The doll which had been Sarah's is now owned by Mrs. Thomas Buckley of North Tonawanda, the Gorman's daughter. Sarah gave it to Mrs. Gorman just before she died.

For all their almost incredible eccentricities, the Seven Sutherland Sisters were a likeable lot, warm hearted and

open handed. Shyness, born of their early turkey-tending days, accounted in part for their aloofness. They loved their own so much they were loath to commit their bodies to the earth. They loved their pets in life and honored them in death. They made a fortune and they spent it grandly. They held their heads high to the last. They were colorful—and different.

In the region of their nativity, along the wave-built Ridge, in the rich orchard country that surrounds the "City of the Locks," the Seven Sisters "with the longest hair in the world" will be remembered long after statesmen and sages are only names on tombstones.

Chapter 3

Rattlesnake Pete

Rattlesnake Pete was Rochester's most colorful citizen. There are unkind critics who will say he was her only one. Perhaps they have never heard of Walter Hagen.

Anyhow, there was a time whenever the name of Rochester was mentioned, even in far places, this question would inevitably follow: "Have you ever been to Rattlesnake Pete's?"

His real name was Peter Gruber. But many people never knew his last name. As Rattlesnake Pete, a formidable moniker bestowed upon him in his youth, he lived and as Rattlesnake Pete he died.

Pete Gruber was a saloon keeper. But there was no other saloon keeper like him and no other saloon in America like his. In fact people did not think of Pete's place as a saloon. The selling of beverages was incidental to his museum which housed the strangest collection of curios ever assembled under one roof.

For 40 years Pete ran his museum-saloon at 8 Mill Street in the heart of the old downtown section of Rochester near the "Four Corners" and in the rear of the old Reynolds Arcade, birthplace of Western Union.

Thousands beat a path to his door. Visiting notables, wide-eyed rustics, city-bred habitues flocked to the musty curiosity shop filled to the eaves with fantastic exhibits.

There the hairless cow from India faced the 3,300 pound stuffed Percheron horse. There above the first electric chair

used in New York State waved the battle flag of Custer's last charge. Everywhere were the tanks filled with snakes of all sizes and kinds—"repulsive but fascinating," as one visiting socialite put it.

Rattlesnake Pete was a master of reptile lore, one of the foremost authorities on the subject in the world. He knew how and where to catch the serpents, how to treat victims of their fangs (and he saved many lives), how to extract their venom and oil and to market them for medicine, how to use the hide for purses and handbags and the tissue-like outer skin as poultices and how to treat goiter by wrapping the bodies of harmless snakes about a sufferer's neck.

Add to the wonders of his museum the rich personality of its proprietor and it is no wonder that Rattlesnake Pete's place became famous on two continents.

The fabulous Pete, with the drooping mustache, the snakeskin coat and vest, the eternal wing collar, the man whose powerful arms bore the scars of 33 snake bites, was at heart a simple, kindly soul.

He was genial and garrulous. He liked people and people liked him. He advertised "Come in and shake hands with Rattlesnake Pete." He had a vise-like grip. Small boys would go back to their homes on farms and in villages and boast: "Gee, I shook hands with Rattlesnake Pete."

When ladies were present, Pete was the soul of courtliness. But he had grown up in the Pennsylvania oil country in a rough, tough time, he had been an excellent boxer in his youth and there never was any rumpus in his place. He could enforce order without any help from the police. He seldom had to. The average visitor to 8 Mill Street was so spellbound by its wonders that he had little urge to start any trouble.

Rattlesnake Pete well knew the value of publicity and

always was popular with "the newspaper boys," to whom he gave occasional rattlesnake dinners. Usually these were held in a brewery so that any squeamish gentlemen of the press could be well fortified before attacking the snake meat on his plate.

Gruber was every inch the showman. In many a Rochesterian's memory lingers a picture of a strong-featured man in a snakeskin vest, one to four giant St. Bernard dogs around him, riding through the city streets in an open touring car with the figures of snakes emblazoned on its sides and its klaxon in the shape of a reptile.

When Peter Gruber died in 1932 at the age of 75, Rochester lost its most spectacular citizen and his old showplace, shorn of his colorful personality, became just another saloon.

* * *

Peter Gruber was born in Oil City, Pa. on June 29, 1858, the eldest of nine children. His father was a pioneer oil refiner in a small way before John D. Rockefeller built his Standard Oil trust.

Pete's first real job after completing grammar school was as a blacksmith's helper in the engine shop of the Lake Shore Railroad in his home town. He was 18 and a strong and willing worker. He was offered a chance to go to Cleveland and learn the mechanics of locomotive construction.

His father had quit the oil business and wanted Pete to join him in a new venture, a restaurant and saloon. So Pete stayed in Oil City and entered the business in which he was to spend his adult years. It was not long before he had added the nucleus of a museum to the family emporium.

In those days there were many Indians living in the hills around Oil City. They were called "Cornplanter's Indians"

and many of them lived on the reservation granted the famous Seneca chief, Cornplanter, after the Revolution.

Young Gruber made friends with the Indians and from them learned his first snake lore. In after years he used to tell this story:

He was hiking through the mountains one day when he saw an old Indian woman dragging along a large rattlesnake by a rope. When Pete asked her what she was going to do with it, she told him she would first take out the fat and extract the oil which, she said, would cure rheumatism, stiff joints, earache and kindred ailments. Pete was vastly interested and the old squaw peeled off the rattler's skin and gave it to the youth.

Pete's chum at the time was a dentist named Chester Reynolds, whom he called "Doc" and who was an ingenious and inquisitive youth. "Doc" proposed a snake hunt and as Pete related it in his old age; "Me and doc went snake hunting. We didn't catch any rattlers that first time. But I caught a spotted adder and it bit me good and hard. It wasn't poisonous but I was not sure of that at the time. The bite bled a lot and I was plenty scared. But I wouldn't throw the thing away and we toted it home and I put it in a box in the place. That was my first snake and I've never been without them on the premises since."

Later "Doc" and Pete snared three or four rattlers in a mountain den called the Pit Hole and took them back to the saloon in Oil City where they put them in a box. There they aroused a lot of interest and a wire screen was put over the box so that the reptiles could be seen more easily.

The exhibit attracted business and when that lot of rattlers died, Pete went out into the hills and got some more. He

had learned from the Indians how to get the serpents into a box by use of a forked stick.

The young man spent a lot of time with the medicine men of the tribes and learned some valuable lessons in snake lore. He learned how to extract the oil from the reptiles, that snake skin was a treatment for blood poisoning and that a snake wrapped about a sufferer's neck could cure goiter. It was then he became Rattlesnake Pete and the nickname stuck with him all the rest of his days.

Pete and his friend, "Doc" Reynolds, began making a miniature oil well to supplement the exhibit of rattlers in the saloon. The pair whittled it out, painted it and pieced it together in their spare time until they had it in good working order. The oil well created a minor sensation in Oil City "cafe society" and a famous museum was born.

Gruber and Reynolds next constructed a miniature mountain with an ingenious apparatus by which, upon the insertion of a coin in a slot, a gold mine went into operation and mule trains, laden with ore sacks, ambled down the trails. Indian relics, small arms and other curios were gradually added to the collection, until Pete had the nucleus of his later "Hall of Wonders."

In June, 1892, flood and fire smote Oil City at the same time. The Allegheny River and Oil Creek overflowed their banks and ran through the streets. A large oil tank burst, the released oil was ignited by a passing locomotive and the streams and streets of Oil City ran red with flame. Pete Gruber packed up his snakes and other trophies and left his home town. His father sold his saloon and that settled matters for Pete.

Oil City missed the colorful Pete, his museum and snake lore. Besides he had been an excellent boxer who had met

some of the oil country's best in the ring. He was a skilled swimmer and had saved several lives.

Pete's first stop was Pittsburgh. There he found that a city ordinance forbade a combination and museum. He went to Jamestown and on to Buffalo, with indifferent success.

Around the end of 1892 he came to Rochester to visit a married sister. He liked the town and decided to locate in the Genesee Valley trading and industrial center. He sent for his collection and rented a place on West Main Street near the old Erie Canal. There his combination saloon-museum did very well. Within eight months he moved to larger quarters at 8 Mill Street where he stayed for nearly 40 years and which he later purchased.

In Rochester his collection grew and his fame spread. In the era of the railroad excursions, hundreds came to Rochester from all over Western New York. Boat loads came across Lake Ontario from Canada. Most of the visitors made a bee line for Rattlesnake Pete's.

In those days Pete got out advertising cards which told of the marvels of his place in these gaudy phrases:

"Greatest Curiosity in the City. Restaurant and Museum, Peter Gruber, Prop. Foreign and Domestic Liquors. Imported and Domestic Cigars and Tobacco.

"See the Indian Dying from Rattlesnake Bite.

"The Museum contains Rattlesnakes, Blacksnakes, Copperheads, Spotted Adders, Four-legged Chickens, Eight-legged Lambs, Alligators and Gila Monsters.

"Pete will cure Carbuncles, Felons, Boils, Blood Poison and Goiter quicker Than Any Man on Earth.

"See Death of Cleopatra from Bite of an Asp, An Oil Well in Operation, a Facsimile of Coal Oil Johnny's.

The Seven Sutherland Sisters and Their Papa

Isabella Sutherland at Her Husband's Tomb

The Museum Contains all kinds of Battlefield, Indian and Naval Relics.

"When in town stop in and shake hands with Pete and test your strength."

The card by no means listed all the strange things to be seen at Pete's. In the museum were the meerschaum pipe owned by John Wilkes Booth, a shingle from the Johnstown flood, the ax wielded by a wife slayer, relics of the James boys, of Oliver Curtis Perry, the Western New York bandit who stole a train, and other nortorious criminals and the skull of the horse that brought General Sheridan "up from Winchester 30 miles away." At least the curios were so labeled and nobody questioned their authenticity—at least not in Pete's presence.

Under Pete's roof in the heyday of his museum was this aggregation of animals, reminiscent of Noah's Ark: A lion cub, a cinnamon beer, alligator turtles, horned toads, a badger, a wolf, a coyote, a big South American macaw named Old Colonel, a green parrot named Dora, a pair of monkeys and snakes all over the place, including a hooded cobra, a boa constrictor, and a python.

There also were trick electrical and mechancial devices to trap the unwary, such as the one that shot a padded fist out at you after you dropped a coin in the slot to see "the dancing girls" and the strength-testing machine which, when one grasped its handles, shot a stream of water up one's trousers leg. And greedy fingers which reached for the gold piece set into the bar got an electric shock.

Is it any wonder that Rattlesnake Pete's became almost synonymous with Rochester, that its fame spread across the oceans so that Rochesterians traveling abroad found Pete's

picture on the walls of a hotel in Athens and his name a familiar one in such far-away places as the Swiss Alps and Shanghai.

Circus people were fond of Pete. They recognized in him a fellow showman and a master one. Dexter Fellows, the prince of press agents, never came to town with Barnum and Bailey's circus without looking up his friend Pete.

To the day of his death Gruber carried as a watch charm the lion's claw set in gold and diamonds that was the gift of Frank Bostock and inscribed "from the Animal King to the Rattlesnake King" for saving the life of Clyde (Phoebe) Powers, the noted clown who had been bitten by a rattlesnake.

But Pete employed his skill for the lowly as well as the great. Using the lore he had learned from the Indian medicine men in Pennsylvania, he saved many a sufferer the loss of a hand or foot from blood poisoning. If a person he treated had funds and was willing to pay, Pete would take what was offered. If there was no money, nothing was said about payment.

Pete treated hundreds of cases of goiter and although he received no citations from the medical society, many persons were ready to testify that his methods worked. He used a harmless variety of snake for goiter cases. Holding the reptile by his head and tail, "Doctor" Gruber would loop its body tightly about the patient's neck. Pete's theory was that some virtue in the snake's body in its writhings drew out the virus of the goiter. He lost no patients. But he lost a lot of snakes because four such treatments resulted in the demise of the serpent.

Pete claimed no cure-all. He did maintain he could cure

goiter in a younger person. With an older person and an advanced case, he made no guarantees.

He had his own method of extracting the venom from a snake bite and it won the attention of so eminent a zoologist as Dr. William T. Hornday, director of the New York Zoological Park.

During his lifetime Gruber was bitten 29 times by rattlers and four times by copperheads. He took care of his own snake bites—all but once. Then, after being bitten in a large artery, as he recalled it, "the floor came up and hit me." For nine days he was unconscious and it was nine months before he completely recovered.

Twelve times various newspapers throughout the country reported Pete Gruber's death from snake bite. He saved the clippings and chuckled about them. To his everlasting credit he never repeated Mark Twain's remark.

The master of reptillian lore developed a market for the oil and the venom of snakes. Physicians used the oil. There was a steady demand for snakeskin which was made into handbags and purses. The tissue-like outer skin was used for poultices, of the kind Pete employed in treating blood poison.

* * *

As the years went on and gray crept into Pete's scraggly mustache, the stories about him multiplied. He became an institution.

Even today men no longer young will tell how Rattlesnake Pete was the idol of their boyhood, almost as venerated as Buffalo Bill and holding much the same place in young hearts as Hopalong Cassidy does today. They remember Pete and his dogs and how before the advent of the automobile, the big St. Bernards would carry Pete's mail in their mouths

from the old Postoffice in Church Street to 8 Mill Street. They remember their first visit to that wondrous place, when they saw all the snakes and everything and how Pete patted their head and bought their dad a glass of beer. They remember the smell of the animals and snakes, mingled with the aged-in-the-wood odor that clings to old bars.

A few may remember the nautical bicycle that Rattlesnake Pete invented in the late 1890s. It was propelled through the water by a paddle wheel. The inventor tried it out one Sunday in the Genesee River at Charlotte before a large crowd. The waves tossed the thing about violently and it made only a snail's pace against the river current. Pete had to give up the idea. Still it was good publicity.

When the silver screen was young, a motion picture company conceived the idea of a snake hunt in the river gorge around Maplewood Park with Pete in the star role. The other actors got cold feet when Pete began to release live snakes so that he could catch them for the camera to record. He was pretty nearly the whole show. He fell into a hole and ripped his pants and he slipped into the river in pursuit of a rattler and emerged drenched to the skin. Neither incident detracted from the picture, which was supplemented by an exhibition of the Gruber method of extracting venom from living snakes and oil from dead ones.

Whenever any strange animals showed up in Rochester, Pete was sent for—to pick sinister looking lizards from banana shipments in the railroad yards, to capture monkeys escaped from a carnival, to kill snakes, invariably harmless ones, that householders found in their cellars.

All this was in addition to his regular forays to the hills with his forked stick and snake box in his open car with the big dogs in its tonneau. The Bristol Hills was one of Pete's

favorite hunting grounds in the Rochester region. When he really wanted to get rattlers, he went to his native Pennsylvania mountains.

Of course the master snake hunter was called in on the great python hunt at Sea Breeze Park in 1929. It is doubtful that any snake ever escaped, and now the whole thing is regarded as a publicity stunt that backfired. But there was a tremendous furor at the time until a python, probably planted there, was finally dispatched under a show wagon. The press agent at the bottom of the episode is dead now but there is a strong suspicion that the "escaped" python was really sold. Anyhow Pete led the hunt—with some skepticism.

Prohibition came and Pete ignored it. The advancing years and many snake bites began to take their toll, even of such a robust frame. There came a time when there were no more snake hunts, when Pete could no longer ride through the streets of his city in his open car with the snake crests upon it, the big dogs by his side.

On October 11, 1932 there were black headlines in the Rochester newspapers. Rattlesnake Pete was dead. Black crepe floated from the door of the house in Averill Avenue, the Gruber home for many years. The last of the St. Bernards, Queenie, paced the yard with drooping tail. Her master was no more. Rochester had lost its most colorful citizen. It would never see his like again.

After Pete died, the red-brick building at 8 Mill Street became just another saloon. The museum was sold at auction. A legend had ended. A generation grew up that had never known Rattlesnake Pete.

However, some of the curios which once drew thousands to 8 Mill Street have never left the Rochester scene.

The major part of Pete's collection was bought at auction

by Attorney William L. Clay. Bill Clay is a colorful character in his own right. He delights in the unorthodox and likes to take bizarre law cases. Once when he was confined to his home by a cold, a judge ordered the lawyer's immediate appearance in court to argue a case. Clay appeared immediately —in pajamas and bathrobe.

Many of the oldtime Rattlesnake Pete exhibits are in and around Clay's home in East Rochester. Others are in storage elsewhere.

Clay sold the electric chair to a traveling road show. He presented to the Rochester Museum the vest, trousers, hat and shoes, made of rattlesnake skin, which Pete used to wear on state occasions. The extensive Gruber gun collection graces the amusement room of the Clay domicile. It includes a Colt revolver reputedly once owned by Jesse James and with the notches in its handle by which the bandit kept score.

Bill Clay also has the John Wilkes Booth pipe, the Samoan war shield, a tomahawk reputedly once a favorite weapon of Sitting Bull, the Indian warrior and other Indian relics. The dying Indian and Cleopatra and most of the Gruber snakes are in storage. The oil well and the coal mine have been dismantled.

The giant stuffed horse, which was a highlight of the Gruber museum, for several years reposed in the Clay garage. Pranksters one Halloween night took it from its stall and the huge animal showed up under the Flying Red Horse sign of a nearby gasoline station. The steed had been denuded of its tail and some of its hide and was such a sorry sight that Clay had to junk it.

That must have made Rattlesnake Pete turn over in his grave—for in his colorful lifetime he had been mighty proud of that stuffed horse.

Chapter 4

Specks in the Sky

'Twas a balmy Summer afternoon and a goodly crowd was there.

But this has nothing to do with "Joe's barroom on the corner of the square" or with the oft-quoted verse about "The Face on the Floor."

Rather this has to do with "The Speck in the Sky" and a carnival—or maybe, a county fair, a Fourth of July or Labor Day celebration or Old Home Week.

The place? It might be almost anywhere in the East or South.

The time? Almost any year from 1877 on.

High carnival is in the air. The "goodly crowd" has enjoyed the ball game, the foot races, the tug of war, the horse-pulling match. It squealed with glee when the squealing greased pig was finally caught. It even listened—briefly—to the orator of the day. It kept time to the band music. It has stuck around for the grand finale of the doings—the balloon ascension and the parachute jump. That was the event which stood out in the biggest type on the bills which for weeks had sprawled over poles, fences and meeting house sheds.

The trench has been dug. The bonfire has been built and is roaring merrily. Over it the big balloon fills slowly with hot air. There is a shout, "Let her go, boys," and the men at the guy ropes let go. The big bag rises, until it is up 2,000 feet or more. It looks like a black ball up there in the sky.

Suddenly the crowd grows tense. It sees a speck dangling from that ball in the sky. The parachutist has cut loose. Down floats "the speck" until it comes into closer view as a human figure under an open "umbrella." It lands easily and with a bow and a flourish acknowledges the plaudits of the crowd.

Another "Flying Allen" has won a brush with death—to give another crowd a thrill.

During the last three quarters of a century, that scene has been repeated countless times before countless thousands. Three generations of "Flying Allens" have been "Specks in the Sky" to thrill the multitudes at the fairs and carnivals. They merit the title of Western New York's Number One family of daredevils.

Grandpa and Grandma thrilled to the stunts of three pioneering Allen brothers in horse and buggy days. Dad and Mother chugged out to the fair grounds in their Model T to see the second generation of Allens perform. The new streamlined age brought a third generation of daredevils, a young generation sadly stalked by tragedy, and with Allen women for the first time in the act.

The act always has been in the blood of the Allen clan. And fear is not in its lexicon. One thinks of Kipling's lines:

"What dam of lances bred thee forth to jest at the dawn with death?"

The Allens did their jesting with death in broad daylight. But one of them jumped from a balloon in total darkness. He was blind. Another made a farewell performance at the age of 68.

They have jumped singly, in twos and threes. They have been shot from cannons. They have landed in treetops and on mountains. They have been flung against the sides of

buildings. They have been burned when balloons caught fire. Always they have laughed in the face of danger.

They have not always cheated the dark angel that lurks in the shadows for every daredevil. In the last 15 years three young Allens, two of them young women, have lost their lives in the pursuit of their perilous vocation. Another, a mere boy, was indirectly its victim.

Today one Flying Allen is holding the fort alone. He is the father of three of the young victims. At the age of 56, Edward B. Allen of Batavia, a veteran of the first World War, is carrying on the family tradition, performing with a thrill show in the South. He can't quit now. He has been jumping since he was a boy of 13.

The story begins in 1875 in Dansville, the village that nestles in the shadow of mighty hills. There lived three Allen brothers, Ira, Comfort and Martin. They were hearty chaps and liked to do hair-raising stunts.

Ira, the eldest, launched the tribe in the public entertainment field when 77 years ago he walked a tight rope he had stretched across the old Genesee Valley Canal at Ossian Street in his home village.

Two years later, Martin made his first jump from a balloon at a height of 2,500 feet at the same spot. The brothers had first sent up to 1,000 feet a trial balloon carrying a sand bag of a weight equalling that of a man.

In the early days the Allens did not always use parachutes. They came down with the balloon, hanging on to the trapeze bar at the bottom of the bag. Once Ira landed on a hill near Canaseraga, more than 10 miles from his starting point.

The fame of the Allens spread. For years they toured with fairs and carnivals, singly, in pairs or as a trio. They varied their balloon act with other stunts. Ira rode a bicycle

on a tight rope. He and Martin did double trapeze performances. Faded old newspaper clippings tell of their early days of glory.

In later years Martin generally played a lone hand. He collected rattlesnakes and other reptiles and showed them as a side line. He performed on a trapeze bar while his nephew, Warren, Comfort's son, rode a bicycle on a tight wire above his uncle. Comfort did all kinds of solo stunts in his time. In 1896 he collected $900 in prizes at a Providence R. I. exhibition.

The three pioneers had some close calls but none of them ever was seriously injured. They made their own canvas balloons. Comfort had a knack of folding parachutes to which attributed much of the clan's freedom from mishap.

The years take their inexorable toll—even of daredevils with parachuting in their blood. Ira spent the last 25 years of his life in darkness. A boy in his teens, he ran away from home to join his father and two older brothers in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was wounded and eventually became blind as the result of his wounds. His nephew, Edgar W. "Red" Allen of Dansville, recalls that Ira once jumped after he had lost his sight and that his nephews ran under the balloon, telling the old man where to land. Ira died in 1932 at the age of 86.

Comfort, who in his youth had driven miles on the towpath of the old Genesee Valley Canal, was 80 when he died. "Red," maintains that his father more than 50 years ago devised an aluminum dirigible but lacked the funds to have it patented.

Martin Allen was 90 when death claimed him. For years he ran a jewelry store in Dansville. He made his last jump when he was 68 years old at a Booster Day celebration in

the village. The dean of "The Flying Allens" wore his old green tights and he landed safely on East Hill, far above the town.

In their lifetimes the three brothers had often flirted with death. Each died in his bed. Their average life span was 85 years.

* * *

Dansville folks still talk about the time in 1907 that Warren "Speck" Allen, wearing a derby hat, parachuted safely from the 330-foot high Shawmut Railroad bridge in Stony Brook Glen.

"Speck" was 29 years old then and already a seasoned performer. He was nicknamed "Speck" because someone, watching one of his parachute jumps from a balloon, once said: "Why, he looks like a speck way up there."

The Shawmut bridge from which Warren Allen made his leap before a big crowd 45 years ago is gone. The bridge which spanned Stony Brook in the present state park of that name, one of the region's beauty spots, was built in 1907 and once it was known as the highest bridge in the world. In 1948 it was torn down and sold for junk, all 1,207,537 pounds of it, after it the Pittsburgh, Shawmut & Northern Railroad, long in receivership, abandoned its 170-mile line that wound over the mountains.

"Speck" Allen, still a resident of Dansville, made the last of his many jumps—his first one in 15 years—in 1938 at Le Roy. He was 62 then and he landed in a cow pasture when his parachute cord became twisted and he was forced to spin around in mid air to untangle it.

But he was used to such hazards. Once in Nunda a gust of wind threw him against a tree as he descended and both

his legs were broken. And he still remembers when he was drawn against a Dansville building and hurt—because somebody failed to loose a guy rope.

In 1907 when "Speck" made his memorable drop from the high bridge in Stony Brook Glen, his father and uncles had retired from the daredevil business. However, a cousin, the son of Martin Allen, was making balloon ascensions. Once Stephen Allen was seriously injured when his balloon caught on some telephone wires and he fell 20 feet. That was in Dansville, scene of so many appearances of the Allens. Steve died in 1917.

And in 1907, "Speck's" 11-year-old twin brothers, Edgar "Red" and Edward "Ed" Allen, were jumping off poles and barns with umbrellas as parachutes. They were preparing to follow the family tradition.

Ed made his debut at the age of 13; his twin the next year, at the Lockport Fair.

Jovial "Red" Allen, operator of a welding business in Dansville, and a past district commander of the American Legion (both twins served in the first World War), has many tales of his daredevil days.

He recalls in his second year as a performer that the ropes became twisted in his descent at a show in Delhi and he could not open his 'chute. However, he landed unhurt in the top of a tall pine tree on a mountain five miles from the scene of his ascent.

He told of the time in Dansville that he escaped banging into a bank building only by pushing himself away from it with his feet. He eventually landed in a roofless garage, then under construction. He crashed down into some scaffolding and got out through a window, with only a few scratches.

For some years the twins did a double jump act. One of their stunts was to eat ice cream cones as they dangled from trapeze bars high above the crowds. Once they had a poodle in the act. The dog jumped with them and had its own red, white and blue parachute which, by means of an ingenious rigging, was loosed as the brothers leaped.

Some animal lovers protested and when the Allens showed up at the Hemlock "World's Fair," the Livingston County sheriff warned them he would stop the act and arrest them for cruelty to animals if the poodle jumped. The twins rigged up a dummy and dropped it, instead of the pooch. The sheriff, thinking the Allens had defied him, came on the run. When he saw the dummy, "he was sore as hell," to quote "Red."

The twins were sometimes billed as "The Devils of the Air." Ed also was called "The Human Comet" and Edgar, like his father, was dubbed "The Professor."

Two other brothers, James and Richard, helped fill the balloons and aided the act in other ways, but stayed on the ground. So did the four Allen sisters.

"Red" Allen will tell you that the wind is always an important factor in parachuting and that a jumper also looks for a big back yard or open field in which to land. He says the jumper can control his 'chute to a considerable extent and recalled that in two jumps the same day at Coudersport, Pa., he landed in almost the identical spot each time.

"Red" made his last jump at Byersville near Nunda in 1928, shortly after his marriage. He went up in an old balloon whose top burst at 300 feet. His 'chute opened just before he hit the ground. His wind was knocked out and so was his jumping career. Mrs. Allen put her foot down and grounded her Edgar—permanently.

As her husband recalled the old days, I caught a wistful note in his voice. He admits that jumping from balloons is "in the Allen blood."

After his twin retired, Edward Allen carried on alone, until his sons and daughters were old enough to join the act and the panel truck with the legend, "The Flying Allens" on its side became a familiar sight throughout the state.

* * *

Eddie, Jr., was 18 when he made his first jump in 1936. He was a tall sturdy youth, a star athlete at Batavia High School.

The next year his sisters, Gloria, 17, and Florence, 15, made their debuts in a duo act in Youngstown, Ohio. They were the first women of the family to take to the air.

At home in Batavia a younger brother and still younger sister were eager to join the act as soon as they were old enough. All were trained by that intrepid veteran, their father, Edward Allen.

Soon the three personable youngsters, Eddie, Gloria and Florence, billed as "the world's youngest jumpers," were rocketing to national recognition. They presented a colorful sight, the three, dressed alike in white jodhpurs, dark shirts and white ties, floating down together under their spreading parachutes from their big balloon.

They added a new wrinkle to the act. Two of them were shot from a cannon suspended from the balloon before they parachuted to earth. The new stunt was well received.

September of 1937 found the trio, under the management of their father, on a successful Southern tour. On Sept. 23 the Allens were headliners at the Tri-County Fair at Blackstone, Va. That day tragedy struck for the first time in the long history of the daredevil clan.

As the three began their descent from a height of 2,000 feet, Gloria's parachute swung against the rigging of brother Eddie's chute. It was ripped from skirt to crown. Gamely, the girl pedaled and maneuvered under the torn parachute to break her fall.

In that fall her young body was crushed. As she was being rushed to a hospital, Gloria begged: "Don't give up the act because I am hurt."

She lost her fight for life seven days later. Hundreds of schoolmates and neighbors attended the funeral services in St. Joseph's Church in Batavia. A memorial stone, the gift of friends in the Virginia town where she died, stands at her grave.

The family heeded the stricken Gloria's plea "not to give up the act." Florence and Eddie carried on in 1938 and their cousin, Warren, Jr. "Speck's" son, joined them.

On Feb. 19, 1942, tragedy struck again. Joseph F., the 15-year-old son of the Edward Allens, was a chemically minded freshman at Batavia High School. That day he was conducting an experiment in the basement of the family home. He was taking apart a high explosive bomb used in the cannon act. It exploded in his hands. Joseph was fatally injured. He had planned to take his place in the family act the next Summer.

When the second World War came, Eddie, as had his father in another war, joined the colors. He became an officer in the Air Force. The 100 parachute jumps he had made helped to pay his way through the University of Pennsylvania where he starred in football and wrestling. He now is a physical education director at Drexel Hill, (Pa.) School. He has no thought of returning to the parachuting field.

Florence, now Mrs. Edwin Wood of Buffalo, quit the

hazardous business but Warren, Jr., kept the family tradition alive, by making jumps all over Western New York and Northern Pennsylvania. His wife, Pearl, made occasional jumps with him until she retired in 1941.

Early in 1946, Warren, then 46 years old and the father of six children, announced he was quitting the business. It "was too risky for a man with a family." He sold his equipment. He had made 500 jumps.

On July 4, 1946, Warren agreed to make one last flight at Salamanca. It was to oblige a pal, Buddy Radley, 19-year-old barnstormer, who had been hurt, not seriously, when he parachuted into the path of an Erie train.

The Salamanca crowd was horrified when just as Warren's hot air balloon lurched skyward, its undersection ripped away at the seams. The 'chutist clung to the freed trapeze and parachute attachment and hit the ground from 50 feet up. Warren was fatally injured. On his way to the hospital he rallied long enough to implore Buddy Radley to "quit this business."

At the same time another member of the ill-starred third generation of "Flying Allens" was carrying the banner. Arlene, the 17-year-old daughter of the Edward Allens, made her fifth balloon ascension at a Bristol, Tenn. carnival on July 27, 1946. It was her last.

Her descending parachute hit a wire, charged with 6,600 volts. Her clothing was set afire and her body seared. But she escaped immediate death because her body and a metal ring of the parachute rigging hit the high tension wire almost simultaneously. The metal ring caused a short circuit which stripped an automatic switch, shutting off the power.

After Arlene had been four days in an oxygen tent, her recovery was believed certain. She was brought home to Ba-

tavia in a bed rigged up in the family's panel truck, the one with the name, "Flying Allens" on its side. The accident cost her life although she lingered until the Fall of 1948. It was the fourth tragedy in the daredevil family in 15 years.

Now her father, Ed Allen, is carrying on—alone. He is seldom in Batavia. His engagements in the South, mostly in Florida, literally keep him "on the jump." He is not the last Allen, but he is the last of "The Flying Allens." He is 56 now and he has been jumping for 43 years. He can't quit now.

Chapter 5

A Cart for Japan

A jinrikisha, is according to Webster, "a small, two-wheeled vehicle drawn by one or more men and originally used in Japan."

Pulteney is a small Steuben County village perched high above the West branch of the two-pronged Keuka Lake in the vineyard country.

Believe it or not, there is a definite connection between the Oriental vehicle and the Finger Lakes village.

For the first jinrikisha ever used in Japan was made in a wagon shop at Pulteney in 1869. That's the long-standing local tradition and there is strong evidence to support it.

Still living along Keuka's shores is an aged man who as a boy saw the pattern from which the original cart was made and heard from the lips of the man who made it the story of how he received from a Baptist missionary, a former shipmate, a request to build a cart in which he could convey his ill wife from place to place in Yokohama.

The missionary's name was Jonathan Goble and he was born on a farm two miles north of Keuka in 1827. His grandfather, also named Jonathan, came from New Jersey to settle upon those acres in 1820. Previously the site had housed a gang of counterfeiters. But an old Steuben County history states, the first Jonathan "was a good man and died in the Baptist Church." His son, Gershem, father of the missionary

Jonathan, lived, died, and is buried on the farm above Keuka's waters.

Young Jonathan was a bright youth but a hot-tempered one. There is a story that he wrote a letter threatening to burn down the buildings of a farmer against whom he had a grudge. That farmer's barn burned shortly afterward and young Goble was thrown into jail. Later he proved he was miles away at the time.

While he was in jail, young Goble saw the error of his ways and was converted. He joined the Wayne Village Baptist Church and resolved to become a preacher of the gospel.

Around 1852 he joined the United States Navy, not only to see the world and serve his country, but also to explore the need for missionaries in foreign lands.

As a Naval marine, he participated in an historic event. He was with Commodore Matthew C. Perry's squadron which went to Japan in 1853, a visit which a year later brought the treaty that opened the hitherto isolated island kingdom to trade with the West.

Goble was a member of the crew of the Mississippi, pride of the fleet and the flagship of Commodore Perry. With the expedition was another young man from Steuben County, Francis C. Pollay, who had run away from his Hammonsport home to join the Navy. He was a ship's carpenter. Later on he was to run a wagon shop at Pulteney and to play a major role in our story.

While in the Navy, Goble took under his wing a Japanese boy, one of several natives rescued from a junk wrecked in the Pacific and taken to San Francisco. The boy returned to Japan with the Perry fleet. The others were afraid to go back. Goble became interested in the lad, whom he called Sam Patch, after the daredevil who leaped to his death over the

Genesee Falls at Rochester in 1829. He taught the boy English and instructed him in religion. When Goble returned to the United States, he took his protege with him. Sam Patch created something of a sensation in Upstate New York, which had never seen a Japanese before.

After his Navy service, Jonathan Goble pursued his ambition to become a minister. From 1855 to 1859 he was a student at the Hamilton Theological Seminary at Hamilton, N. Y., later to become a part of Colgate University.

Following his ordination to the Baptist ministry, Goble, with his wife, Eliza Weeks, a Wayne girl, returned to Japan in 1859 as a Baptist missionary. His first post was Kanagara. He was the first Baptist missionary and the third of any denomination in the islands.

Goble served as a missionary in Japan for 22 years. At one time he was an interpreter and aide to one of the Japanese nobility, Lord Yammononchi.

Around 1869 his wife became ill and needed to get out into the open. She complained of the jolting she suffered while riding in the palanquin, the current means of transport in Yokohama, then a small fishing village. The palanquin was a covered or box-like litter borne on poles resting on the shoulders of two men.

It was then that Jonathan Goble conceived the idea of the vehicle which was to be known to millions as the jinrikisha, which means in Japanese "man-strength carriage."

The story has several versions. The most popular one is that he saw the picture of a baby carriage in the American magazine, Godey's Lady Book, and hit upon the idea of an oversized "baby carriage" to be hauled by a man between shafts and in which his sick wife could ride without discomfort.

Another version has Goble conceiving the vehicle as a device to ease unemployment after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1867, throwing upon their own resources thousands of men who had been soldiers. The idea was to make cart pullers of them in a new system of transportation.

Still a third story has Goble originating the 'ricksha because as a colporteur or hawker of Bibles and tracts, he tired of carrying his wares in his arms. Goble did sell thousands of Bibles and other religious works to the Japanese during his stay in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Then, according to the accepted story around Keuka, Goble remembered his fellow sailor of the Perry fleet, Frank Pollay, who had opened a wagon shop at Pulteney, back in the Upstate of Goble's nativity.

So he wrote to Pollay of his need for an "oversized baby carriage." And in the little shop of the Steuben County village, the wagonmaker fashioned the wheels, the shafts and the box. The iron work was done by a blacksmith, Obadiah Wheeler, in nearby North Urbana.

Then the completed parts were sent to Goble in Japan where they were assembled—and the Orient had its first jinrikisha.

That is the tradition which prevails around Keuka Lake after all these years.

But again there are conflicting stories. One has it that Pollay sent only patterns of the vehicle to Goble, that the patterns were drawn to scale on the back of a roll of water paper, and that native carpenters constructed the cart from them. In either case the first jinrikisha seems to have been the technical brain child of the former ship's carpenter who ran a wagon shop in Pulteney.

It was first used in 1870. The Japanese improved the Goble

model by adding springs, the hooded top and wheel guards. When the burden was heavy or extra speed was required, one or more outrunners were added by means of a cord attached to the crosspiece of the shafts used by the single operator.

Within two years the new vehicle was in general use in Japan. It supplanted the palanquin. Bearers became pullers. The idea spread to China, to India and other Oriental lands where man power was plentiful. Now the 'ricksha is fast fading out of the Oriental picture. Some day it will be a curiosity.

* * *

Along the east shore of Lake Keuka where the East Lake Road joins County Highway 94, in a white frame house that is 114-years old, live Andrew Wheeler and his wife. They are in their late eighties but their memories are keen as a razor's edge.

All their lives they have dwelt in the lovely Keuka Lake region where their forefathers were pioneers. Andrew Wheeler is a grandson of Obadiah Wheeler, the North Urbana blacksmith who he says did the iron work on the cart that Jonathan Goble ordered from his friend, the wagonmaker of Pulteney, that he might haul his ailing wife in comfort through the narrow streets of Yokohama.

Andrew Wheeler has vivid recollections of his boyhood when he used to hang around Frank Pollay's wagon shop at Pulteney. The tall spare wagonmaker had been made deaf by a gun burst aboard ship and received a Civil War pension. Wheeler remembers the time that Pollay took down from the rafters of his shop the pattern of the vehicle he had made

according to Goble's wishes. It was of thin lath. It was lost in a fire which destroyed the shop a half century or more ago.

Francis Pollay died in 1912 at the age of 79. He sleeps in the village cemetery at Pulteney, along with his wife, Lucy, who survived him by two years. The words, "U. S. Navy," are on Pollay's headstone.

So far as known, he left no papers attesting to his manufacture of the first jinrikisha in the world. I am willing to take the word of a grand old man like Andrew Wheeler of the Town of Wayne.

Jonathan Goble, father of the jinrikisha, has another claim to fame. In 1870–71 he translated the Gospel of St. Matthew into the Japanese. It was the first book of the Bible to be published in Japan in the 19th Century.

The original copy of the translation is in the library of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School on its hilltop campus in Rochester. It is part of the Samuel Colgate Baptist Historical Collection which came to the Rochester school after the merger of the old Rochester Theological Seminary and the Colgate Theological Institution, the former Hamilton Seminary, in 1929.

It is a rare document, probably the only copy in existence. There is a story back of its preservation. It was presented to the Wayne Village Baptist Church in 1872, possibly by Goble himself, as he made a trip back to "the states" in 1871.

In 1914 the Rev. William Guillan, a Colgate alumnus, now of Ridgewood, N. J., but then pastor of the Wayne church, received a letter from a former clerk of the church who had moved to Pennsylvania 30 years before. The man wrote that he had found among his effects the copy of the Goble translation. It had been gathering dust in his attic for three decades without his knowing it was there. The Rev.

Mr. Guillan promptly presented the copy to Colgate University.

Also in the library of the divinity school at Rochester is a letter Goble wrote to Hamilton Seminary officials in 1871. In it he pleads for more Baptist missionaries in Japan and tells of his difficulties in having his translation of the Book of Matthew printed. It was a slow and tedious process. The native printers used "engraven wooden blocks," with each page a block. Furthermore there was the constant danger of interference by a government given to sporadic anti-Christian edicts. It was printed in Kuni characters, the language of the common people, and not of the literary classes, a language long now in disuse.

Missionary Goble was in the United States from 1871 to 1873. Then he returned to Japan where he remained until 1882. That year his wife, Eliza, died after years of suffering. She is buried in the foreign cemetery at Yokohama, far from the vineyards and the blue lakes she had known in her girlhood.

That was in accordance with her wishes. In 1860 when she first came to Japan with her missionary husband, she had written: "Here in Japan let me live, in Japan let me labor, in Japan let me die, and in Japan let me be buried."

In Japan a son and two daughters were born to the Gobles. The son went to sea at the age of 16 and was never heard from.

The small, rather fragile trunk which Eliza Weeks Goble took with her to Japan now is housed in the temporary museum of the Steuben County Historical Society, the 125-year-old white house in Savona that is the residence of its curator, Alfred Spencer. The trunk came from the attic of Frank Gleason, along Keuka Lake.

After his wife's death, Goble came back to his native land to stay. He revisited the scenes of his boyhood around Keuka. Andrew Wheeler remembers hearing Goble lecture in Wayne Village Baptist Church which he had joined after his youthful repentance in jail. Wheeler said the missionary, a large man with sideburns and an impressive manner, spoke on social life and customs in Japan.

Mrs. Wheeler recalls that about the same time she played with two Goble daughters who were visiting their uncle, John Weeks, who lived on Keuka Lake.

In 1884 Goble and his two daughters went to Tacoma, Wash., where the girls married. The year 1892 found the former missionary living in a home for Baptist ministers at Germantown, near Philadelphia. He died in St. Louis in 1898.

There is evidence that Goble in his late years did not forget the scenes of his childhood or the former shipmate who had fashioned the first jinrikisha for him so long ago. While he was in Philadelphia he sent Frank Pollay at Pulteney a three-volume set of ecclesiastical works and wrote on the fly leaf "Carried to Japan in 1859." The books are now in the possession of the Rev. Marion P. Wheeler, a Baptist minister who lives near Austinburg, Pa., and is pastor of the Young Hickory Baptist Church in Troupsburg, N. Y. Mrs. Pollay gave them to him after her husband's death in 1912.

No one seems to know where Jonathan Goble is buried. He has an impressive monument in Japan and other faraway Oriental lands—the thousands of jinrikishas that have rumbled down a thousand streets. He was their father.

Chapter 6

Churchill's York State Heritage

"Winston Churchill is SO British. He is the personification of John Bull."

Perhaps you have read or heard some such statement and been tempted to explode with a SO American phrase, "Oh, Yeah?" For, be it remembered, the British Prime Minister, one of the towering figures of his times, is half American.

In his veins is the blood of many an English duke. So also is the blood of many a York State pioneer. None of the latter was as famous as John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, who won glory on Flanders fields in the 18th Century. But Winston Churchill need not be ashamed of any of his American forebears. His maternal grandfather, Leonard Jerome, cut quite a figure in his day and his career was as colorful as any duke's.

By the way, the Prime Minister's full name is Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill. The Leonard is for the grandsire who rose from Pompey farm boy to become one of New York's most dazzling millionaires.

In entering public life, "Winnie" was following in the footsteps of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, whose political career was brief but turbulent. Maybe he also inherited some of his flair for politics from his great-grandfather, Ambrose Hall, who in the 1820's was commissioner of highways in Palmyra and member of the State Assembly from Wayne County.

It would be a splendid thing if the Prime Minister, on some future trip to this country, could take a few hours off from the affairs of state to visit some of the Upstate places associated with his forefathers.

In contrast to the splendor of Blenheim Palace and the portentous bustle of 10 Downing Street he would find the birthplace of Grandpa Jerome on the edge of peaceful Pompey village on its hilltop south of Syracuse. The building in which Leonard Jerome was born is part of a barn now.

Should he visit Palmyra and Marion in the land of the drumlins, those strange-shaped hills that are relics of the glacial age, he would find on a back road near Marion the low old farmhouse where the Jeromes lived more than a century ago. And he could see also the square old frame house on Palmyra's Canal Street which once belonged to his grandfather.

Palmyra, the history-steeped canal town, would give him as grand a welcome as it gave its native son, Admiral Sampson, when he came home from the War with Spain. Atop the steel pole which towers 150 feet above the broad Main Street the British flag would float along with Old Glory.

And should Churchill come again to Rochester, where twice he lectured in earlier years and whose University accorded him an honorary degree, by radio, in the war year of 1941, the statesman would see the sturdy brick house on Fitzhugh Street in the once stylish Third Ward where his grandfather lived when he was a Whig publisher in the Flour City—before Churchill's mother, the dark and lovely Jennie Jerome, was born.

Rene Kraus, one of the Churchill biographers, ascribes to the American strain in the premier's blood characteristics of

"shrewdness, keenness, talent for self advertisement, and sense of humor."

One wonders if Winston Churchill did not also inherit his audacity, his gusto and his gift for the pungent phrase from ancestors who were pioneers in Upstate New York.

* * *

One of them was David Wilcox, native of Massachusetts who in 1791 came with his wife and two children to the raw new settlement of Palmyra, poling his boat through the narrow creek called by the Indians Ganargua and by the pioneers Mud Creek. He was then 28 years old and a blacksmith, as well as a farmer. He bought 100 acres of land for $125. He died in Macedon in 1828. That is about all that is known about David Wilcox.

He figures in the Churchill story because he had a comely daughter named Clarissa. In 1818, when she was 21 years old, a thirsty hunter came to her door and she gave him a drink of water.

The hunter's name was Ambrose Hall and he came from Williamstown, Mass. He was 21 years Clarissa's senior. The chance meeting blossomed into romance and on Christmas Eve of the next year they were married by the Presbyterian minister in Palmyra.

They lived the rest of their days in and around the village, which boomed with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. They lived, first on a farm at Baptist and Quaker Roads, north of Palmyra, and later on the site of the present bandstand in the village park.

Ambrose Hall became a man of consequence and property in Wayne County, owner of several farms and of a valuable

strip of land along Palmyra's Main Street. He was only 51 when he died in 1827, three months after his wife.

They sleep in the cemetery on the hill above the village. Probably they were first buried in the pioneer Swift graveyard on Church Street. There is a substantial monument on the well-kept lot which is surrounded by an iron fence. There are headstones for Ambrose, his wife and two of their five daughters, who died young. There also is a small, old fashioned, peaked white shaft to mark the burial place "of the family of Ambrose Hall." Another daughter, Caroline, is buried there, along with her husband, the Rev. Fay Purdy.

Two other daughters are buried elsewhere. They married two dashing young brothers from over Marion way who captured fame and fortune in later years far from the hills of Wayne. One, Katherine, married Lawrence Jerome. The other, Clarissa, married Leonard Jerome. Leonard and Clarissa had a daughter, Jennie, who became the bride of Lord Randolph Churchill and bore him a son named Winston.

* * *

The Jeromes were of English stock. The first one in America, Timothy, came to New England from the Isle of Wight around 1709.

Early in the next century we find a descendant, Isaac Jerome, living on a farm in Pompey, Onondaga County. He had married Aurora Murray of Chatham in 1807. She was of Scotch descent and like a certain celebrated great-grandson, was described as lively and ambitious. Her husband was more conservative. He must have possessed a martial spirit for he served in the Onondaga militia and rose to a captaincy.

To them, between 1808 and 1830, eleven children, nine

sons and two daughters, were born. The fifth son, Leonard W., arrived on Nov. 3,1817. Pompey, the old village on the Cherry Valley Turnpike, also is the birthplace of another noted American, Horatio Seymour, twice Governor of New York and a candidate for the Presidency in 1868.

According to tradition, the house in which Leonard Jerome was born was long ago moved back from the road and became a part of the present long barn on the farm. Traces of wall paper, a stairway and small window panes in the weather-beaten structure testify to its former role as a dwelling. There are also evidences it once housed poultry.

On that farm along the road to Jamesville and Syracuse on the northern edge of sleepy little Pompey, still live those of the Jerome blood. The present occupant is Dwight L. Huffman. His wife is the former Ella Jerome, who claims distant (very distant) relationship to the British statesman. Their son is named Dwight Jerome Huffman. In his quiet way, he is proud of the family line and won't soon forget the visit of a Life Magazine photographer to the farm.

From that farm young Leonard Jerome trudged down the road to the village school. He grew into a tall, handsome lad who had a way with him. He had a soaring ambition and was determined to have a good education.

At the age of 19 he entered Princeton. He had little funds and worked his way. After two years at Princeton, he transferred to Union College, from which he was graduated in 1839. In reminiscences of classmates he is pictured as a companionable, attractive and hard working collegian.

Around 1837, the Isaac Jeromes and their numerous progeny moved to a farm on the Eddy Ridge-Hall Corners Road northwest of Marion. The long one and one-half story frame farmhouse in which they lived is still there, with several

stately stone houses as its neighbors. The onetime Jerome domicile is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Leon D. Nolan, who are much interested in its history.

Seemingly Isaac Jerome was a tenant farmer in Marion. No deeds are on record to show he was a land owner. Probably he came to Wayne County because his brother, Hiram K. Jerome, lived there. As early as 1823 Hiram Jerome opened a law office in Palmyra. Old road district records indicate he lived for some years on a farm in Marion while practicing in the larger village. In 1840 he was appointed Wayne County judge.

After graduation from Union College, young Leonard Jerome read law in Uncle Hiram's office. Records of the old Marion Academy reveal that two younger brothers, Isaac, Jr. and Charles Lee, were students there in 1839–41.

Tales persist in Palmyra about the dashing Jerome boys from over Marion way, Leonard and his younger brother, Lawrence, who drove high stepping horses and fancy rigs and were so popular with the belles of Palmyra. Among those belles were the Hall sisters, Katherine and Clarissa, whose nickname was "Patty." The girls had inherited considerable property.

Larry Jerome married Katherine Hall in August of 1844. Later that year they and brother Leonard moved to Rochester. Uncle Hiram had preceded them to Rochester in 1842 and took the two brothers into his law office.

They showed small liking for the law and in 1845 bought into the Rochester Daily American, a Whig newspaper. Their parents moved in from Marion and old Isaac and one of his sons worked on the paper. Leonard boarded with Larry and his Katherine at what is now 74 Fitzhugh Street South.

Leonard Jerome married Clarissa Hall in Palmyra in April

of 1849 and the two young couples lived together in the brick house in Fitzhugh Street, now marked with a bronze tablet.

In Rochester the Jeromes were active in Third Ward society, in the balls, musicales and tableaux of the period, and in Whig politics. Larry was the gayer of the two brothers and delighted in practical jokes. Leonard was more dignified and full of grandiose plans.

In 1850 the brothers sold their interest in the American and Leonard was rewarded for his loyalty to the Fillmore wing of the Whig party by an appointment as United States consul to Ravenna, Italy. He never filled that post but instead moved to Brooklyn in 1850 to become associated with the burgeoning telegraph industry. In 1852 he assumed charge of the consulate at Trieste, Italy. He remained there only 16 months. There was a new President and Franklin Pierce cared naught for deserving Whigs.

Brother Lawrence lingered in Rochester until 1855 when he, too, moved to New York. He had served as a Third Ward alderman and as deputy collector of the port in the Flour City. A son, William Travers Jerome, was a headline figure around the turn of the century as the crusading district attorney of New York.

By 1858 all the Jeromes had left Rochester. The last to go was Uncle Hiram, who returned to Palmyra where until recent years his little, old-fashioned, one story law office stood on Market Street.

* * *

Winston Churchill has never manifested any absorbing interest in his New York State heritage. Whatever genealog-

Rattlesnake Pete and Friend

"There Was No Place in America Like Pete's"

ical research he has done seems to have been connected with the Marlborough line.

Nor until he became an international figure, did the York State communities where his forefathers lived evince any great interest in Winston Churchill.

In late years a spirited rivalry developed between Rochester and Brooklyn as to which city was the birthplace of his mother. Lady Randolph Churchill, who should know, stated flatly in her autobiography that "I was born in Brooklyn." Still some Rochesterians persisted in pushing their city's claim until in 1952 Rochester's City Historian, Dr. Blake Mc Kelvey, whose passion for historical accuracy transcends any "civic pride," presented conclusive evidence that Jennie Jerome had been born in Brooklyn in 1854.

That is why the bronze tablet placed in 1952 at the brick house on Rochester's South Fitzhugh Street merely states that "the grandfather of Winston Churchill resided here."

Churchill observed a tactful neutrality during the Rochester-Brooklyn feud. The University of Rochester in 1941 awarded the Prime Minister an honorary degree through the medium of radio. In his response, the politician in Churchill said: "*As you tell me,* my mother was born in Rochester." More recently he confirmed Brooklyn's claim in a congratulatory message.

There is a story that on one of the statesman's visits to this country before the second World War, he was being shown around New York City by a delegation which included Kenneth Lovelace, scion of a Marion family, then connected with a banking house in the metropolis. Lovelace is said to have mentioned something about their grandfathers being friends in Western New York when both were young men. "Ah, that would be in Marion," Churchill replied. If

the tale be true, the name of little Marion, N. Y., seems to have stuck in the mind of the British premier when other names have not.

Spencer L. Knapp, Palmyra insurance man, believes in the old saw about Mohammed and the mountain. Since Churchill never could find time to visit Wayne County, Knapp took Wayne County to Churchill—in the form of a half dozen photographs of buildings associated with the Hall and Jerome families in Palmyra and Marion.

Among them were pictures of the square frame house on Palmyra's Canal Street which once belonged to Leonard Jerome and where he and his Clarissa may or may not have lived; of the old Jerome home near Marion; of the Ambrose Hall homestead and of the house in Canal Street, Palmyra, where, according to local tradition, Churchill's mother, Jennie Jerome, used to visit her aunt, Mrs. Cynthia Lovell.

En route to Florida in January, 1952, Knapp stopped off in Washington. Churchill was due for a visit to the capital at that time and the Palmyran hoped to present his pictures in person. But ocean storms delayed the Prime Minister's arrival and Knapp left his pictures at the British Embassy. Shortly he was elated to receive a note of thanks, signed by Winston S. Churchill himself and not by any flunky. Of the photographs, Churchill wrote: "They are of great interest to me and I am very glad to have them for my family records."

The British leader seems to have a real feeling for his maternal grandparents. 'Tis said the portraits of Leonard and Clarissa Jerome grace the Churchill bedroom and Winston has written in rather admiring vein of his American grandfather.

That grandfather was no ordinary American. He was an

almost fabulous figure in the New York of his day. He made a fortune in the stock market during the Civil War, lost it and made another. When he was owner of the New York Times, he armed his staff during the wartime draft riots to defend his newspaper office against a mob.

Leonard Jerome, tall, dark, impeccably groomed, mustached grandee, did everything on a grand scale. He was one of the founders of the American Jockey Club and its elaborate race track was named Jerome Park. With August Belmont he introduced four-in-hand driving in New York and dazzled the metropolis with the elegance of his turnouts and the lavishness of his parties. Before he built his mansion on Madison Square, he built stables fully as magnificent as his mansion. He converted the ballroom of his home into a private theater. He became a patron of the arts, an "angel" for rising singers and actresses, especially young and pretty ones. And this sophisticate had been born on a farm on Pompey Hill!

The four Jerome daughters were reared in luxury, educated abroad and traveled widely.

It came to pass that on a moonlight night in August of 1873, a grand ball was held aboard a British man of war in the harbor of Cowes. Among the guests was a lissome American girl of 19, whose slim Grecian face was crowned with rich, dark curls. Another guest was the 24-year-old son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough, five years out of Oxford.

He danced the first quadrille with the dark-haired American girl to whom he had just been introduced. Then came a waltz. The young peer disliked waltzes. "Let's walk this out," said Randolph Churchill to Jennie Jerome. The couple walked three times around the deck, bathed in moonlight. After they had returned to the ball room, Lord Randolph

said to a friend: "See those two girls standing there? That dark one I will make my wife."

He kept his word, despite some objections by his parents, whose opposition melted when they learned the size of the Jerome fortune. Lord Randolph and Jennie Jerome were married on April 15, 1874.

It had been a love match with them. So had it been with Jennie's grandparents, Ambrose Hall, the thirsty hunter, and Clarissa Wilcox, the blacksmith's daughter, who had given a stranger a drink of water, at Palmyra in the backwoods so many years before.

In the Autumn of 1874, among the birth notices printed in the Times of London was this one:

"On the 30th November at Blenheim Palace the Lady Randolph Churchill, prematurely of a son."

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, destined to guide Britain through her darkest hour, was born in a palace.

The birthplace of his American grandfather now is part of a barn.

Chapter 7

Fiend of the Finger Lakes

Eighty-one years have gone by since Edward Rulloff died on the gallows with a snarl and a sneer but down Ithaca way they still talk about the Fiend of the Finger Lakes.

He was the arch criminal of his time and legends cluster about his fabulous career. Despite the seeming paradoxes of his character he could hardly be called a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde. For there was so little of the good doctor in his makeup. Edward Rulloff was 99½ per cent the devilish Mr. Hyde.

He did not look like the devil he was and he fooled a lot of people in his time, this scholarly appearing man with the powerful frame and the delicate womanish hands, the man with the ingratiating manners and the gentle musical voice, whose bland, inscrutable face was framed in burnsides and chin whiskers, whose massive head was tilted a little to one side like that of an expectant bird.

He looked like a college professor or a doctor or even a preacher. During his fantastic lifetime he passed at various times as each of those.

But the musical voice could on occasion pour out a torrent of profanity and filth; the delicate hands could deal out death and the dark gray eyes that seemed so guileless could blaze with murderous hate.

At heart he was a bandit and a murderer despite the glossy veneer. Just how many people he killed never will be known

for a certainty. Suspicion was directed against him in the deaths of at least seven persons but when he went to the gallows, it was only for the shooting to death of a clerk during the bungled holdup of a store in Binghamton in 1870.

He was a crafty, slippery rogue who covered his tracks well—until the last job—, who talked himself out of many a desperate corner, who slid out of many a jail.

It was in 1845 that his young wife and baby daughter vanished overnight from the face of the earth. To this day people of the Storm Country are sure that Rulloff killed them, that he put their bodies in a big wooden box and dumped it into Cayuga Lake. But long and expensive dragging of the lake never yielded chest or bodies and Rulloff escaped the noose for that crime through a legal maneuver which resulted in a celebrated "corpus delicti" court decision.

Edward Rulloff spent 18 of his 51 years on earth behind prison bars. While he was serving a 10-year sentence in Auburn Prison, he devoted himself so assiduously to the study of languages that during his later periods of freedom, he posed as a learned philologist, was once offered a professorship at a Pennsylvania college, lectured before a national scientific convention and claimed to have discovered a new universal language.

No stranger character ever lived in the land of the long blue lakes. Perhaps his learning was superficial. Perhaps he merely had a remarkable memory, a superb aplomb and a ready flow of words. There is no question of his basic wickedness. Still when folks down Ithaca-Dryden-Rogue's Harbor way speak of his deeds of darkness, they are likely to add with a trace of awe in their voices: "But that Rulloff was as smart as they made 'em."

His fantastic story is preserved in old records in Ithaca and at Cornell University, in newspaper files and in the folklore which had been handed down through the generations.

And his massive brain is preserved—in alcohol—at Stimson Hall on the Cornell campus, along with the other jars that hold the once celebrated collection started long ago by Dr. Burt Green Wilder. Doctor Wilder's is there, too, along with others tagged "jurist," "drunkard," and "Irish laborer," to name a few of the labels. The Rulloff brain is heavier than the average. But modern scientists hold that the size or weight of a person's brain does not necessarily denote a corresponding mental capacity. Rulloff's skull was thicker than the average. So was his hide.

In the quarters of the De Witt Historical Society in downtown Ithaca, the old Courthouse built on the site of the one in which Rulloff first stood trial, there are on exhibit other mementoes of the arch criminal of the Lakes Country.

There is a section of the heavy, hand-wrought log chain, which, according to tradition, shackled Rulloff after his first arrest to a cell in the basement of the stately, white-pillared 120-year old Clinton House, which is still on the Ithaca scene. Tompkins County Clerk W. Glenn Norris, president of the historical society, said that the chain tethered a boat to a Cayuga Lake dock before it was turned over to him.

And there under glass is the death mask, a plaster cast of the murderer's features, made by an Ithaca artist and beside it a framed copy of the broadside of 1859 when an enraged populace demanded Lynch Law justice for Edward Rulloff.

* * *

The story begins in St. John's, New Brunswick, where the villain of the piece was born Edward H. Rulloffson in 1821.

He came of respectable German stock but when he was still a youth, he was sent to a Canadian prison after two mysterious fires in the store where he clerked coincided with two lootings of the stock.

In 1842 he drifted into Tompkins County—on a canal boat. Soon he was teaching "a select school" in Dryden, the village east of Ithaca. Among his pupils was pretty 19-year-old Harriet Schutt, daughter of a farming family of the neighborhood.

Harriet married the glib, suave stranger on the last day of the year 1843. For a time they lived in a boarding house in Ithaca where Rulloff was employed by a botanical druggist from whom he picked up a smattering of medical lore. He even tried to practice medicine. He had cards printed with "Doct. Edward H. Rulloff" on them. A few are in the possession of the historical society in Ithaca.

According to testimony in his second trial, he was called to the home of his wife's brother, William H. Schutt, to treat a baby who appeared to have the colic. The child died in convulsions. Two days later the mother also died suddenly. There were some symptoms of poisoning and in later years suspicion fell on Rulloff. There were no formal charges, just neighborhood talk.

After living for a while with Harriet's parents, the young couple around 1844 moved to a farmhouse at Lansing, 5 miles north of Ithaca and 1½ miles from Cayuga Lake.

Court testimony by the wife's relatives later revealed that the Rulloffs' married life was sometimes troubled, that the husband had exhibited a fierce jealousy of the attentions paid his wife by her cousin, a young Doctor Bull.

In the testimony also is an account of Rulloff striking his wife with an iron pestle when she failed to grind some pep-

per fine enough to suit him. There also is a hearsay story of the young husband trying to get his wife to take poison in a suicide pact. He was to drink the poison after her.

Harriet Rulloff and her 3-months-old daughter were last seen alive on the late afternoon of June 23, 1845. Olive Robertson, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Robertson, who lived across the road, testified that the mother and child appeared to be in good health.

The next morning Mrs. Robertson noted that the shutters of the Rulloff house were closed, an unusual circumstance. At noon that day Rulloff came to Tom Robertson, asking the loan of a horse and wagon. He said he was returning a chest to one of the Schutt relatives who lived 8 miles away. Later that man testified he had never left any chest at Rulloff's and none was ever delivered to him.

Tom Robertson took the stand and swore that after Rulloff "took dinner with us," his son drove the horse and wagon to their neighbors' house; that he saw Rulloff pushing a chest toward the door. Robertson said he helped load it into the wagon and that "his end weighed 60 or 70 pounds." He said Rulloff came out with a sack which looked as if it were about one third full and put it in the wagon; that the contents of chest or sack were never explained and that Rulloff returned the horse and wagon about noon the next day.

Not until later did Robertson surmise what still is the popular belief in the Lakes Country—that the heavy wooden box he had helped lift into his own wagon contained the bodies of Rulloff's wife and child.

Rulloff shortly left on the stage for Geneva, saying he was going West. He told Mrs. Robertson his wife had gone to visit in Madison, Ohio, and that she might be back "in two or three weeks, maybe never."

In a few weeks Rulloff with his usual aplomb was back in the Ithaca region. In the meantime neighbors had found his wife's clothing scattered around the deserted house and ugly rumors were afloat. Rulloff expressed surprised pain that his neighbors should suspect him of foul play.

He was apparently in flight again when Harriet's brother, Ephraim Schutt, spotted Rulloff on the back platform of the last emigrant car of a westward-bound train in the Rochester station. Ephraim testified that Rulloff then promised to accompany him to the Ohio village where he said his wife was staying. At the docks in Buffalo Rulloff gave his brother-in-law the slip. Ephraim went on alone to Madison where nobody had heard of or seen his sister. By chance, on the return trip, he ran into Rulloff in Cleveland. He had the man arrested and Edward Rulloff returned to Ithaca—in irons.

Feeling ran high against him in Tompkins County but there was no clear evidence of murder and he was indicted and convicted of the lesser charge of abducting his wife. Then came the 10-year stretch in Auburn Prison from which he emerged a scholar.

But Tompkins County was not ready to let the matter drop. On his release from prison, Rulloff was rearrested, this time on the charge of wife murder. He obtained a writ of habeas corpus claiming double jeopardy. The courts sustained him but a new Grand Jury indicted him for the slaying of the child.

Rulloff got the trial shifted to Tioga County but he was convicted just the same and in October, 1856, was sentenced to be hanged. His attorneys, Boardman and Finch of Ithaca, appealed to the Appellate Division and there the conviction was affirmed.

The jig seemed to be up for Master Criminal Rulloff. But

one of his defense lawyers was the resourceful and determined young Francis Miles Finch, then on the threshold of a distinguished career in literature and the law. Years ago Rulloff and Finch, several years his junior, had been the only members of a Greek class in the Ithaca Academy. Finch had no particular affection for his onetime classmate but he was an able lawyer and prepared to carry the appeal to the highest tribunal in New York State, the Court of Appeals.

While Lawyer Finch was mapping his strategy, his slippery client essayed the first of his several jail breaks.

It was in the soft darkness of a May night in 1857 that a team of black horses wheeled a carriage to the outer door of the old stone jail in the village of Ithaca. A man sprang out of the shadows and leaped into the driver's seat. Through the night the black horses trotted over the tall hills, to Newfield and beyond. The next day the abandoned horses and rig were found along the road. Nobody ever claimed them.

The magnetic Rulloff had won over to his bidding the young son of the Ithaca jailer. It was Albert Jarvis who left the door of the prisoner's cell unlocked. In later years Jarvis became Rulloff's accomplice in various crimes and their last job together cost both of them their lives.

After his escape Rulloff showed up in Western Pennsylvania where the learning he had picked up in Auburn Prison so impressed the faculty of a small college that he was offered a professorship. He chose that particular time to rob a jewelry store and was fleeing on foot with his loot in a carpet bag when a man came along and offered him a ride in his buggy. It turned out that the horse was stolen and the law caught up with its driver. When the law closed in, Rulloff characteristically repaid his benefactor by tossing the

loot-laden bag into the back of the buggy and claiming it belonged to the horse thief.

Within a few months he was on his way back to Ithaca, again in irons. A hostler who had been a fellow convict at Auburn recognized Rulloff and turned him in.

In the meantime Finch had argued Rulloff's case before the State Court of Appeals at Albany and raised points that brought about a new judicial interpretation of the corpus delicti, "the body of the crime," not the physical body of a victim of murder, but the essential element of an alleged crime.

He argued that the prosecution, in place of a corpus delicti, had put in the bare fact of disappearance, that instead of laying the foundation for their presumptive evidence in a violent death distinctly proven, the People laid it in the proven fact of a mere disappearance.

Finch won his appeal. The high court ruled that the circumstances were not so unequivocal and certain as to establish the fact and that the trial judge had erred in not discharging the prisoner at the close of evidence.

It was a smashing victory for the Ithaca lawyer, who, carrying his first murder case to the highest tribunal in the state, had raised the question of whether a man convicted of murder could be punished when there was no corpus delicti. The decision became part of the judicial literature of the English-speaking world and as a result two Latin words came into common speech.

Francis M. Finch became a member of the State Court of Appeals and later dean of the Cornell Law School. But perhaps he is best remembered as a poet. It was he who wrote "The Blue and the Gray," the poem recited at so many Memorial Day exercises, which begins:

"By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead;
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day;
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray."

In Cornell's Regional History Collection, in Judge Finch's minute pencilled handwriting is the original draft of "The Blue and the Gray." The poet changed the word "wash" in the first line to "flow," a commendable revision.

Also among the Finch papers is a letter written to him from a Pennsylvania village. With many a hook and a flourish of the pen, Judge Finch's most famous client wrote: "I have been confined in Erie for want of a secure jail in Warren County." The signature is "Edward H. Rulloff."

The "corpus delicti" decision of 1859 meant that Rulloff must go free unless new evidence was forthcoming. Fifteen years had gone by and there was no new evidence.

The prospect aroused Tompkins County to fighting frenzy. Shortly throughout the countryside was broadcast a poster which read:

"SHALL THE MURDERER GO UNPUNISHED?"

"Edward Rulloff will soon gain his freedom unless prompt and effective measures are taken by the people to prevent it.

"Shall this monster be turned loose to glut his tiger appetite for revenge and blood? . . . In the name of humanity, in the name of the relatives of his murdered wife whose heartstrings have been lacerated by this fiend in human shape, in the name of the murdered wife and child, whose pale

ghosts call to you from the silent tomb to do your duty, shall the murderer go unpunished?

"We call on those who wish justice done to the murderer to meet at the Clinton House in Ithaca on Saturday, March 12, 1859, at noon. It will depend upon the action you take that day whether Edward H. Rulloff walks forth a free man or whether he dies the death he so richly deserves."

A battering ram, the size of a telephone pole, 20 feet long and requiring 20 men to handle it, was constructed and hidden in the Six Mile Creek. Should Sheriff Smith Robertson refuse to deliver his prisoner, the mob planned to smash down the door of the jail. Work also was begun on a gallows.

If Rulloff heard the angry voices in the street outside his cell where he was shackled to the floor by chains so heavy they calloused his ankle, or heard the hammering on the gallows being built to hang him, he gave no sign. Over and over he recited in his rich voice Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon" —in three languages.

As the plans for the lynching party went forward, Tompkins County seethed. Sheriff Robertson determined on action to avert a blot on the fair name of the community.

On the morning of March 11, 1859, a carriage drove up to the jail. The sheriff got in it and drove off alone. Two citizens who had been watching the jail left their posts to go to breakfast. The sheriff speedily drove back to the jail and loaded Rulloff into the carriage. Away they went to the steamboat dock.

Just as the Cayuga Lake steamboat was about to steam down the Inlet, sheriff and prisoner leaped aboard. Soon the sheriff had his man safely behind the walls of Auburn Prison.

Five thousand angry citizens milled about the Clinton

House in frustrated rage. Some wild speeches were made. Threats were heard against the sheriff and Lawyer Finch. But the excitement soon died down. In a few days the man his Tompkins County neighbors had branded "a fiend in human shape" walked forth a free man.

* * *

Rulloff's subsequent career was a bizarre mixture of scholarly research and crime. He spent considerable time in the New York City Public Library gathering material for his manuscript on "The Origin and Formation of Languages." He also spent considerable time in various prisons, usually for burglary.

In a New Hampshire town he masqueraded as a retired Episcopal clergyman, an Oxford graduate. After a store in the town was burglarized, stolen goods were found in Rulloff's possession. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison but escaped within three months.

In 1867, as the erudite "Professor Edouard Leurio," he addressed a convention of the American Philological Association at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie. He read from his manuscript on the formation of languages and the scholarly gathering was impressed. But when Rulloff sought to collect funds for the publication of his work, he was politely turned down. After that "the professor" turned to crime as more profitable.

Rulloff returned to his old stamping grounds in Central New York in 1869 when he appeared in a court room in Cortland as defense attorney for a burglar named Dexter. He had acquired considerable knowledge of law—through his bouts with it.

In August 1870, Rulloff, that same Dexter and Albert

Jarvis, who 13 years before had let the master criminal out of Ithaca Jail, went to Binghamton to rob a store. Their plans miscarried. The two clerks they found sleeping in the store gave stout battle. Rulloff's gun killed one of them. The other, although wounded, ran out and spread the alarm in the early morning. A fire bell rang through the quiet streets of the Southern Tier city and the manhunt began.

The next midnight two of the manhunters spotted a middle-aged, scholarly appearing man walking the railroad tracks, carrying a satchel and an umbrella. When they ordered him to halt, he managed to put a passing coal train between himself and his pursuers. Rulloff was soon caught and taken to Binghamton.

The bodies of his two accomplices were found floating in the river. Rulloff vowed he had never seen either of them before. Bruises on the bodies led to the belief later that Rulloff had put them out of the way to make his own escape easier.

While Rulloff was being questioned, the judge who had presided over his Tioga County trial came into the room and recognized the prisoner. To his "Aren't you Rulloff?," he got an affirmative answer. But Rulloff calmly declared that it was merely a coincidence that he happened to be in a town where a robbery and murder had been committed. He talked so convincingly that he was allowed to go free.

A pair of shoes he had left behind in the store as he fled proved his undoing. The left shoe showed an indentation over the big toe. Someone recalled that Rulloff had frozen a foot during one of his jail breaks and that the great toe of his left foot had been amputated. Again the hunt was on. Again he was caught walking the railroad tracks. This time

they did not let him go. The left shoe of the pair found at the murder scene fitted his deformed foot exactly.

He was tried and convicted of murder. He flooded the country with his appeals to prominent people to save the life of "a scholar who has discovered a new universal language." The gullible New York editor, Horace Greeley, visited Rulloff in his cell and was impressed. But John T. Hoffman, Governor of New York, was deaf to all appeals for commutation of sentence.

A lunacy commission examined Rulloff and found him sane. One of the doctors later described him as having unbounded egoism and little genuine learning. He trusted none and he was absolutely ruthless. Once he almost persuaded a sheriff not to put handcuffs on him while he was being transferred from one jail to another. After refusing his pleas, the sheriff said: "If you could escape by killing me, would you do it?" Coolly Rulloff replied "I would kill you like a dog."

He was an infidel and to the last spurned all religious counsel. It was said he spent his last night on earth boasting of his knowledge and uttering blasphemies.

Edward H. Rulloff was hanged in Binghamton before a vast crowd on May 18, 1871. His last act, although involuntary, was spectacular. When he went to the gallows, his arms were pinioned at the elbows with a rope across his back and his hands were thrust in his trousers pockets. When the trap was sprung, his right hand was yanked out of his pocket. His neck was broken but that hand was raised as if in farewell.

After Governor Hoffman had turned down his appeal for commutation, Rulloff said: "I shall be remembered long after Hoffman is gone. He will be remembered only as a scheming

politician, I as the author of one of the grandest theories on the formation of language."

He was partly right. The Tammany Governor is forgotten. Edward H. Rulloff is remembered—not as the author of any grand theory of philology but as the most wicked man ever to live in the land of the long blue lakes.

Chapter 8

A Spy in Their Midst

It was with heavy hearts that the parishioners of St. Mary's in Canandaigua came to Mass in the old church in Saltonstall Street on the Easter Sunday of 1865.

It should have been the first joyous Easter in four bitter war-torn years. Only the week before, the bells had rung out the news of Lee's surrender, of Union victory and the doom of the Confederacy. But now the bells tolled the dirge and in place of the gay bunting, hung in the hour of triumph, black streamers floated down from buildings in the Finger Lakes city.

For Abraham Lincoln lay dead in the East Room of the White House, the victim of an assassin. His secretary of state, William H. Seward, of the Finger Lakes city of Auburn, had been stabbed on his sick bed. Vice President Johnson and General Grant, also marked for death, had escaped.

Grief for the murdered Lincoln and anger against the beaten South mounted to hysteria pitch throughout the North as the plot to kill the heads of state was unfolded.

In Maryland and in Virginia a grim hunt was on for the handsome actor, John Wilkes Booth, who had escaped from Ford's Theater in Washington after shooting the President on the night of Good Friday, April 14, 1865.

Others accused as conspirators had been rounded up. But the man named as second to Booth in the plot was still at large. His name was John Harrison Surratt, Jr., and although

he was only 21 years old, he had been a Confederate courier and spy for four years. There was a wild rumor afloat that it was John Surratt who had stabbed Secretary Seward and felled four of his household. An uncouth giant named Lewis Payne later was hanged for that crime.

Among those who knelt in old St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua that Easter morning of 1865 was a tall, fair haired, rosy cheeked, well groomed young man, a stranger to the community. Little did his fellow worshippers dream that the stranger in their midst was the much-wanted John Surratt.

The night before, he had come to town from Elmira and had registered at the Webster House (now the Pickering) under the name of John Harrison. He was beginning a two-year flight which was to take him into far lands and into strange adventures before he was finally captured and brought to trial.

The presence of Surratt in Upstate New York before and after the assassination of Lincoln has been revealed by the long and patient research of a Rochester housewife. As a hobby, Mrs. Margaret Kahler Bearden, a niece of Hugh Mc Nair Kahler, the magazine writer and editor, has been digging into old records for 12 years and sharing notes with other Civil War historians.

In her study of the conspiracy, she has concentrated on the parts played in the drama by John Surratt and his widowed mother, who went to the gallows, the first American woman ever executed by the government. Today many believe her to have been the innocent victim of mass hysteria and political malice.

Mrs. Bearden found accounts of Surratt's visit to New York State in the voluminous record of his trial in 1867 which ended in a jury disagreement and in his release. Per-

haps he owed his freedom to his alibi—that he was in Elmira the night Abraham Lincoln was shot.

* * *

Maryland-born John Surratt was only 17 when he began serving the Confederacy as a dispatch carrier between Washington and the rebel boats on the Potomac. His mother, an ardent Secessionist, had abandoned a village tavern in Maryland 13 miles from Washington to open a boarding house in the capital city.

In the late Fall of 1864 young Surratt met the fascinating actor, John Wilkes Booth and came under his spell. By his own admission he became involved with Booth and others in a fantastic plan to kidnap Lincoln as the President rode in his carriage to the Soldiers' Home on the outskirts of Washington. Surratt, Booth and four other plotters rode out to lay in wait for the President's barouche.

The scheme was to demand the release of all Confederate prisoners in exchange for the captured Lincoln. But the plot was an utter flop. Lincoln did not ride that day and the conspirators returned to the Surratt boarding house, chagrined and empty handed.

Surratt maintained to his dying day that he never saw Booth after March 18, 1865 and he knew nothing about any plan to kill Lincoln.

On April 3, 1865, two days before the fall of Richmond, he left the Confederate capital with dispatches from Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin to General E. G. Lee at Canadian headquarters in Montreal. There Lee gave him a new assignment.

Surratt was to proceed to Elmira N. Y., gain entry to the big Federal war prison there, make sketches of the place and

gather all other information necessary to a planned wholesale jail-break. Seemingly Canadian headquarters did not realize that the Confederacy was on its last legs.

On arrival in Elmira on April 12, Surratt registered at the Brainard House as "John Harrison" and mingled freely with the many officers in Union blue who were fellow guests. By bribing one of them, he got into the sprawling prison camp which housed 20,000 Confederates, made his sketches and gathered his data.

On April 13, his 21st birthday, he bought a suit of clothes in an Elmira store. Alterations had to be made and he was told to come back in two days for the garments. The Elmira merchant two years later was a defense witness in Surratt's trial.

As he related in after years, he retired Good Friday night at 10 o'clock in the Brainard House (Lincoln was shot at 10:22), "little thinking that on that night a blow would be struck which would forever blast my hopes and make me a wanderer in a foreign land."

The next morning he learned from the excited talk at the breakfast table that Lincoln had been assassinated. No assassin was named. Surratt maintained that never for a moment did he associate Booth with the deed.

However, the disturbing news caused him to revise his plans. He would return at once to Richmond. A Spring freshet had washed out railroad tracks in the Southern Tier and he found he would have to travel via New York.

Three months earlier, he had stayed with Booth in New York at the home of the actor's relatives and he planned to stop over there again in case Booth was in the city.

At the telegraph office in the lobby of the Brainard, Surratt wrote out this dispatch: "J.W.B. If you are in New

York, telegraph me. John Harrison." The operator had hardly finished sending the message when Surratt heard some appalling news from four chattering women who had entered the hotel lobby. They were talking about "that actor Booth who had killed the President."

Surratt was stunned. He sensed his own grave danger and tried in vain to retrieve his message to Booth. He resolved on flight to Canada and packing his carpetbag, left Elmira by train for Canandaigua. He planned to go on to Rochester and there board a Lake Ontario boat for Cobourg, Ontario.

At Canandaigua he registered at the Webster House. To his dismay he learned that no boats ran from Rochester to Cobourg on Sundays. It must have been a desperately worried young man who knelt in the church in Saltonstall Street (now long gone from the scene) that Easter Sunday of 1865.

The register of the Webster House, now in the archives of the War Department, figured in Surratt's defense. The name, "John Harrison," is there, smack in the center of the page. But the presiding judge would not admit it as evidence, holding that the name could have been written in later. The register of the Brainard House mysteriously disappeared before the trial. Federal agents had been busy. It would have been valuable defense evidence.

On Monday, April 17, Surratt left Canandaigua, to return by rail to Elmira, thence to make the long journey to Montreal by way of St. Albans, the Vermont border town once raided by men in gray.

* * *

The next two years were packed with adventure for the fugitive. For five months he found refuge in Canada.

In the meantime John Wilkes Booth had been killed as he emerged from a blazing barn in Virginia and Surratt's own mother and three men had gone to the gallows after trial by a military commission in an atmosphere of hate and vengeance.

Surratt crossed the ocean, became a soldier in the Papal Zouves under an assumed name, made his escape from Rome by leaping a deep ravine when his identity was discovered and then fled to Egypt, where he was apprehended and returned to the United States.

After a jury, half Rebel and half Yankee, disagreed, Surratt was kept in prison until June of 1868. Three months later the charge was nolle prossed and he was set free.

Except for a brief and unsuccessful lecture tour in which he told his strange story, Surratt lived quietly in Maryland the rest of his days. For half a century he was auditor for a steamship line. John Harrison Surratt was 72 when death claimed him in 1916.

There is no record that he ever revisited "the enemy country" of Upstate New York which he had entered as a spy in the Spring of 1865. Yet his memories must often have turned to the prison camp at Elmira, the Southern Tier city where first he heard of Lincoln's death; to an Easter Sunday when he went to the Mass in a city with the old Indian name of Canandaigua; an Easter Sunday when the boats did not run from Rochester to Cobourg.

Chapter 9

"On to Richmond"

"The Congressmen went out to Bull Run,
The Congressmen who like free shows and spectacles."
From "John Brown's Body" by Stephen Vincent Benet

A warm sun shone down on Washington on Sunday, July 21, 1861. There had yet been no decisive battle in the Civil War. For months the Northern press had been screaming "On to Richmond!"

Now at long last the Blue and the Gray were to join battle, along a winding, sluggish Virginia stream called Bull Run. It was 20 miles from Washington.

A holiday atmosphere prevailed in the Union capital. Members of Congress and other high-placed civilians set out for Virginia early in the morning to "see the Rebels run."

Let Benet tell the story as he told it in his epic poem of the Civil War:

"They brought their wives and carriages along,
They brought their speeches and their picnic lunch.
Some brought a little whiskey, too
(A little whiskey is a comforting thing)
For Congressmen in the sun, in the heat of the sun,
For bearded Congressmen with orator's mouths,
The fine, clean-shaven Congressmen
Come out to see the gladiator's show. . . ."

Among the Congressmen who rode down to Bull Run that July Sunday as light heartedly as if he were bound for a picnic at Charlotte was the Hon. Alfred Ely of Rochester, representing the 38th New York District.

He was of "the fine, clean-shaven Websterian" type of Congressman. He took no womenfolk along. It is not recorded that he took along any whiskey either. He was a dignified family man, a substantial citizen. He lived in the Third Ward, the bailiwick of "the Ruffled Shirt," aristocracy and he was a communicant of St. Luke's. He was a proper Rochesterian.

He had come from his native Connecticut to the young mill town—canal port of Rochester in 1836, had built up a successful law business and in 1858 had been elected to Congress as a staunch Union Republican. Now in 1861 at the age of 46, he was serving his second term.

Rochester's own 13th Regiment, New York State Volunteers, was among the raw troops of McDowell's command which faced the equally untried forces of Beauregard that July of 1861. Congressman Ely states the motives for his visit to Bull Run in different fashion than poet Benet. Because the battle made him a national figure, the Rochester politician later wrote "The Journal of Alfred Ely, a Prisoner of War in Richmond," which began:

"On Saturday, July 20, 1861, participating with many others in the anxieties of the day and curious to witness what should occur, I applied to General Winfield Scott in Washington for a passport to visit our troops, then encamped at Fairfax Court House and Centreville, near what is known as Bull Run where it was expected a battle would take place on the following day."

So Congressman Ely put on a fresh white linen coat and hired a carriage, which set him back $25, a lot of money in

1861. But he was a gentleman of the Third Ward and no piker. Along with him to see the Rebel rout went United States Senator Lafayette Foster of Connecticut; Seth Green, described as a sutler with the 13th Regiment and probably the Rochesterian who later won fame as "the father of fish culture"; a Lieutenant Ash and "an Italian gentlemen named Bing."

"We left Washington at 5 A.M. in a double carriage drawn by fine horses, with our provisions for the day laid in and our company apparently in high spirits," the Congressman recalled in his journal.

> *"The huge innocent army, ready to fight*
> *But only half taught the tricks of fighting*
> *Ready to die like picture-post card boys*
> *While fighting had banners and a sword,*
> *And just as ready to run in blind mob panic,*
> *Salutes with a vast and thunderous cry,*
> *Ave, Caesar; ave, O Congressmen,*
> *Ave, Iliad gods who forced the fight,*
> *You bring your carriage and your picnic lunch*
> *To cheer us in our need."*

At Centreville the Ely party ran into several members of Congress. The dusty road to Bull Run was choked with civilian carriages that fine Summer morning. Near its destination the Ely equipage was sideswiped by an Army wagon and a wheel was disabled. Senator Foster left the carriage. It was five months before Ely saw him again. The others of the party wandered off while the Congressman went with the driver to a blacksmith shop for repairs to the carriage.

After the wheel was fixed, Ely encountered two fellow Rochesterians, also sightseeing in the war zone. They were

D. D. S. Brown, editor of an agricultural journal, and Calvin Huson, Jr., a former Monroe County district attorney whom Ely had beaten for Congress. The two were good friends nonetheless.

Then Alfred Ely, with a fine disregard for his personal safety, strolled down the road toward the battlefield, alone. He was closer than he thought. A rifle ball struck uncomfortably near him and he took shelter behind the trunk of a large tree. He stood there a long time. "A cannon ball came crashing through the branches, scattering leaves and adding to my alarm," the Congressman wrote in a later year.

"And when the fight is done, your carriages
Will bear you safely through the steaming rout
Of broken troops, throwing their guns away."

But Congressman Ely of Rochester, in his immaculate white linen coat, his locks worn long in the statesman fashion, was not borne safely away in his double carriage. He never saw "the steaming rout of broken troops, throwing their guns away" in the Union debacle of Bull Run.

For as he watched from his tree shelter, he saw a company advance from a dense wood. They wore uniforms of gray. An officer on horseback was at their head. They halted about 10 rods from Alfred Ely and his tree.

They saw the man in the white coat standing there. Two officers came up and after learning the civilian under the tree was a "Yankee Congressman," they seized him and took away the pistol he had borrowed earlier from Seth Green. Ely was taken before a Confederate colonel who threatened to "blow out his brains." More chivalrous Rebel officers interposed.

Twilight found the road back to Washington clogged with panic-stricken troops in blue. Their flight was impeded somewhat by the carriages of the Congressmen. Maybe the one Ely had hired was in that scramble. Definitely Congressman Ely was not.

He was being marched, the only civilian among 600 Union officers and men, all prisoners of war, to Manassas, seven miles "over the dustiest road it was ever my fortune to travel." He was thirsty and he drank with the other prisoners from a dirty pool along the road.

The prisoners were taken to "a miserable old barn," which was already crowded. There "without any blanket or covering other than a light linen coat upon my back, I passed the night. And such a night," wrote the Congressman who lived in a fine big house in Rochester's "Ruffled Shirt" Ward and in Willard's Hotel in Washington.

His white linen coat was a sorry mess.

Northern editors and politicos had long been shrilling: "On to Richmond." Congressman Ely was the first Northern politician to get to the Confederate capital in 1861. For him the slogan had come true.

With the 600 military prisoners of war, he was taken by train from Manassas to Richmond. They were marched under guard through quiet moonlit streets of the Virginia city to an old brick former tobacco factory, which was later to be known as Libby Prison and to live long in infamy.

Ely's journal reveals the gentleman from the 38th District of New York as a man of restraint, dignity, compassion and considerable courage, despite all the derision his capture evoked. He made no complaint of ill treatment of himself although he relates incidents of cruelty toward enlisted men and of generally evil conditions in the Rebel prison.

Right away Ely prepared a petition to President Lincoln asking immediate action toward effecting the release of himself and his fellow prisoners "through exchange or other means." His petition seems to have been ignored but in his journal the Congressman shows no resentment toward Lincoln. It must be remembered that it was published in 1862 when the war was still raging and that the Congressman was a Republican.

"The Yankee Congressman" who had been bagged at Bull Run attracted as much attention as a caged lion or a circus freak. Southerners whom he had known in Congress, generals and hundreds of merely curious people, ladies among them, flocked to the prison to see the prisoner. One of them fetched him a new dark frock coat to replace "the thin white linen coat that I had on—all I had with me—which had become horribly soiled."

His sartorial squalor seems to have bothered Ely more than the coarse food, the tin cup and wooden plate, lack of any pillow "excepting an oval block of wood which grew tolerably soft as our acquaintance increased," or "the sleeping on the naked floor."

The Southern press jeered at his plight and one paper demanded that "the Hon. Mr. Ely be ironed and sent to Fort Sumter and there kept in a dungeon until the captain of the Savannah is released." The crew of the Savannah, a Southern privateer, had been seized and was being held in prison in New York.

Ely's journal tells of the Richmond Prison Association formed by the prisoners "for their improvement and amusement." He was its president. He also records his joy over the occasional letters that reached him from home and "the photograph likeness of daughter Carrie"; of his grief over "the

sleepless nights which my imprudence must have occasioned my wife." At that point he admits that tears stained the page.

On the second day of the Congressman's imprisonment, Calvin Huson, the former Monroe County district attorney, joined the prisoners. After the legislator's capture Huson, while looking for his friend, also fell into Confederate hands.

Huson was stricken with typhoid fever and after a lingering illness died in Richmond prison. Ely had striven for his friend's release and lamented that the stricken man could not have received better care. On August 8 another Monroe County man, John B. Nichols of Spencerport, died in the prison hospital. He had been wounded at Bull Run and his leg had been amputated. Congressman Ely took care of the burial of his constituent.

On September 12 the captive Congressman recorded that there was no more coffee or sugar on the prison menu because of shortages in Richmond. He rejoiced to know that the Union blockade was succeeding.

Freedom came for Alfred Ely through an exchange of prisoners on Christmas Day of 1861. His train arrived in Washington the night of December 27 and crowds cheered him on the way from the station to Willard's Hotel. In the Confederate capital he had been an object of derisive curiosity. In the capital of the Union he was something of a hero. He addressed a goodly crowd from the balcony of his hotel that night and the band played "Home Sweet Home."

After his release from his five months in durance vile, Ely devoted much time and effort to the plight of all prisoners of war and made several speeches telling of the misery he had seen in Richmond jail.

But back in Rochester, his "home, sweet home," the Republicans denied him a renomination for Congress in 1862.

His political career was closed but he continued his interest in civic affairs and his lucrative law practice.

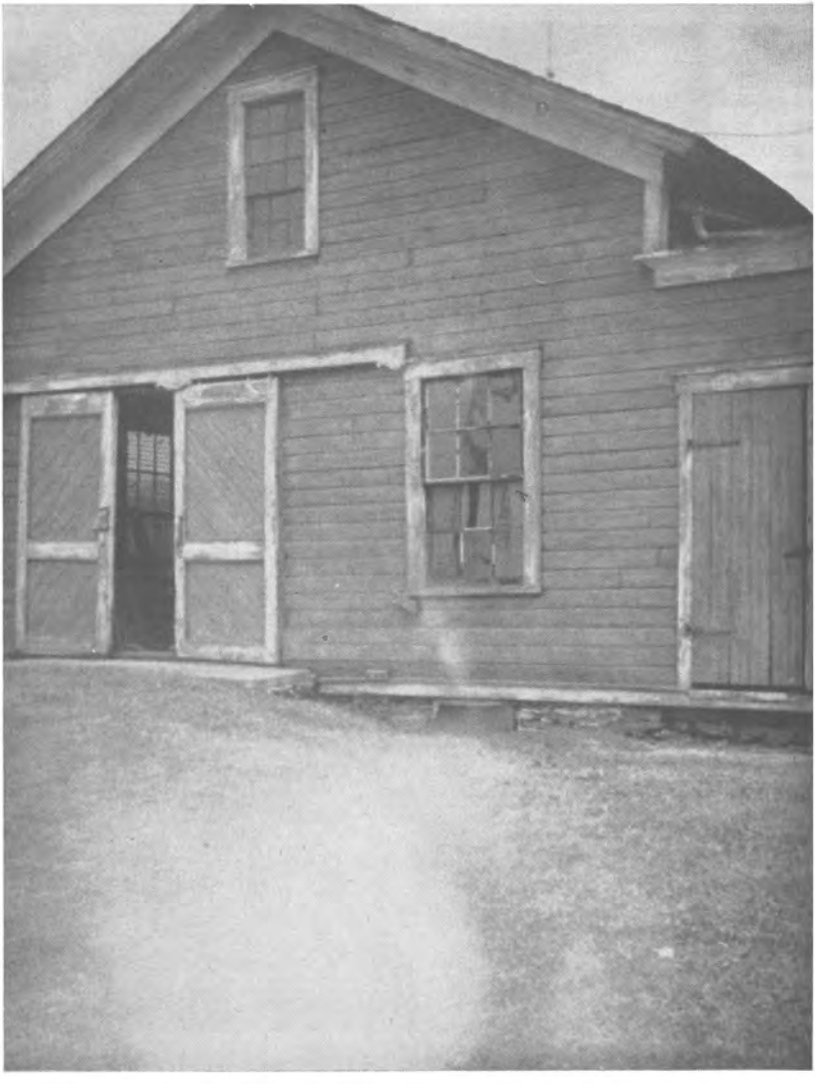
Until his death in 1892, he lived in the rambling brick mansion that still stands at the southeast corner of Plymouth and Troup, now another apartment house in the somewhat frayed "Ruffled Shirt Ward."

He was an honorable man, an able public servant, a cultivated gentleman. But had it not been for a walk he took on July 21, 1861, he would have been forgotten as have so many other Congressmen, who now are just names in local histories that few people read.

Alfred Ely has an enduring footnote in national history—as "the Yankee Congressman" who was taken prisoner by the Rebels as he crouched behind a tree, in his white linen coat, at the Battle of Bull Run.

He was only one of many Northern dignitaries who went out to Bull Run "in their carriages and with their picnic lunch" that July Sunday so long ago. At that, fate was kinder to him, for all his long stay in Libby Prison, than to the Massachusetts Senator who had to ride a mule back to Washington amid the rabble after the Union debacle at Bull Run.

Flying Allens at Lakeville 50 Years Ago



Birthplace of Winston Churchill's Grandfather at Pompey

Chapter 10

The Flag on the "Rebel's" Grave

At Memorial Day time throughout the North, tiny American flags wave in the blossom-scented breezes above the graves of the veterans of all of America's eight wars.

It was the veterans of one army in one war who originated Memorial Day. On May 5, 1868, the national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, John A. "Black Jack" Logan of Illinois, in flowery periods, issued a proclamation calling up the Northern legions who had triumphed in "The War of the Rebellion" to honor their fallen comrades and "on the appointed time, to raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor."

The Boys in Blue faithfully carried out the task each Maytime, until their ranks became too thin, their steps too faltering, their hands too weak. Then the younger veterans of more recent wars took over and placed a starry banner over the grave of each who had fought for it.

But it happens that in Mount Albion, the green and rolling "City of the Dead" on the eastern edge of Albion village, that flag fluttered last Memorial Day above the grave of one who had fought against it.

It was the grave of Andrew M. Hall, who in his youth had been a soldier of the army of Robert E. Lee, who bore to his grave the scars of Union bullets. It is a far corner of the cemetery. It has no headstone but the men of the Albion American Legion post located it and put a flag there.

Few former "Rebels" are sleeping in Northern burying grounds and Andrew Hall lived for 61 of his 102 years in the Orleans county seat village, at peace with his neighbors, even those who had been his foes in battle.

Nobody in Albion made much fuss about the Confederate veteran who lived quietly in their midst and minded his own business until in his late years, when the newspapers began "writing him up" on his birthdays.

Andrew Hall was born in South Carolina and joined the Southern army in 1861 when he was 21 years old. His father also wore the gray and was killed in the war. A brother, living in Maryland when the conflict broke out, enlisted in the Union army and at Antietam that brother and Andrew fought on opposite sides. The brother lost a leg in that engagement. Andrew wasn't wounded at Antietam but Union bullets hit him in two other engagements, one in the neck and the other in his leg.

During the war he was assigned at one time to look after the horses of General Lee and he remembered the General's favorite mount, the white charger, Traveler. The young soldier idolized Robert E. Lee and in after years always celebrated the birthday of the Southern leader on January 19. His own natal day was January 24.

After the war Hall worked on ocean and Great Lakes freighters, in Southern waters during the Winters and in the North Summers. The brother who lost a leg at Antietam moved to Syracuse, N. Y., and in 1881 Andrew came to Albion to visit a friend. As he told it later, "I liked the place and stayed there."

Albion was, and is, an attractive village in the heart of a rich farming country, and the Confederate veteran's liking for the place is understandable. But as the county seat, it was

the gathering place for the G.A.R. and in 1881 the Boys in Blue were powerful and sometimes vociferous. In those days the Republicans waved "The Bloody Shirt" every election to win votes and keep the Union veterans in the GOP camp.

Andrew Hall was a modest, unobtrusive man. He had been no fire-eating planter in the South, but a common man, and he worked in the North for years after the war. He never waved "The Stars and Bars" or sang "The Bonnie Blue Flag." In fact he seldom talked about the war.

He kept to himself how he must have felt when he heard the bands playing the hated "Marching Through Georgia" in the streets of Albion for the parading Grand Army. Maybe then his old battle wounds ached a little. Andrew Hall kept his own counsel and got along first rate with his "Damyank" neighbors.

He married a Northern wife and raised a family of three sons. One of them, William Hall, still lives in Albion. For many years the slightly stooped figure of the erstwhile "Rebel" was a familiar one in Albion, at Main and Ingersoll Streets where he tended the canal lift bridges. It wasn't much like sailing the ocean or the Great Lakes but it did have a maritime flavor. At least there were boats and water.

William Hall recalls that his father occasionally attended G.A.R. encampments in nearby cities and had a good time consorting with his oldtime enemies. He was wont to dismiss his war service by saying: "I was just a soldier, just one of the boys who fought and suffered as no other army ever suffered."

In his late years, when his great age and his unusual status as a former "Johnny Reb" in a "Yank" village set him apart, Hall spent much time at the radio of his home. He was keenly interested in the course of the second World War and

predicted ultimate victory for the Allies "because they were right."

But the old soldier, who in another, long-gone war, had held a horse for Robert E. Lee, did not live to see the day of Allied victory. He died in Albion on January 22, 1945. Had he lived two more days he would have been 103 years old. His wife, Elizabeth, died on December 18 of the same year. She was 85. Their graves are unmarked, save for the little flag that floats there at Memorial Day time.

Andrew Hall was in a sense "a man without a country." He had lived "up No'th" too long among the Yanks for his native state of South Carolina to recognize him.

And as for the Washington government—once when asked why he did not apply to the United States for a soldier's pension, he replied in his quiet way:

"They wouldn't give me a pension. I was a Rebel. I fit 'em."

But "they" did put a flag on the grave of "the Rebel" who "fit 'em." That little flag in a lonely corner of Mount Albion is a symbol of a United Nation.

* * *

There's another burying ground under old trees in Western New York where in fancy you can hear the strains of "Dixie" and hear voices that speak with the soft accents of the Southland.

In the little old cemetery at the crossroads hamlet of Belcoda in the Town of Wheatland, in Monroe County, there is a simple white headstone bearing this inscription:

"The Rev. Clayton A. Coles, 1838–1926. Born in Chattanooga, Tenn. Body Servant of General Stonewall Jackson in the Civil War. Founder of the Second Bap-

tist Church of Mumford. Caretaker of this Cemetery for 25 Years."

Clayton Coles was not a soldier. He was born a slave. He never wore the gray uniform of the Confederacy but through many a rugged campaign he was at the side of one of the South's greatest generals, the one who moved his armies the swiftest and who prayed the longest to the Lord of Battles.

"The Reverend Coles" as Wheatland folks knew him, came to the Genesee Country in the 1880s and spent the rest of his days there, a respected citizen. He was erect of carriage and there was a courtliness in his manner that told of genteel associations. After the Civil War and before he came to Monroe County, Clayton Coles had worked on the estate of John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia merchant prince.

Sometimes he talked about his early life in the South, of pleasant days on the plantations, of campaigning with Stonewall Jackson, of the grief among the Confederates when their leader was fatally wounded—by his own men through a tragic mistake.

But he was not one to live in the past. He became a preacher to his people in the Wheatland area. He found many of them there. Their presence goes back to reconstruction days in the South after the Civil War.

At that time Capt. Frank B. Harmon of the Union Army, whose home was at Belcoda, was stationed at Culpepper Court House in Virginia. He saw hundreds of Negroes, bewildered and aimless in their new found freedom. He thought of the vast wheat fields in his home township so aptly named Wheatland and of the need for hands on those acres.

So in 1867 he had a carload of those Negroes sent up

North to his home neighborhood. It was the start of a considerable migration to the area south of Rochester. The newcomers found a tolerant spirit there and they and their descendants proved to be law-abiding and useful citizens.

Among them "the Reverend Coles" was a leader. Although he had no formal education, he was an eloquent speaker. He dwelt much on the evils loosed upon the world by the sins of Eve and of the lack of good manners on the part of youth. The ways of the gentry Clayton Coles had known in his youth were not the ways of young folks in Upstate New York at the turn of the century.

"The Reverend Coles" first held meetings in the Baptist parsonage which still stands on the Belcoda Road and when his people organized the Second Baptist Church of Mumford, he became its first pastor.

In his later days he lived in a little house near the cemetery which he tended for half a century and where he rests today, along with his wife and two young children—and the pioneers of the Yankee blood.

Maybe if you listen closely, when the wind from the Southland whispers through the tree tops of the old Belcoda burying ground, you can hear a soft Negro voice saying:

"Can I fetch you anything, Marse General?"

And in fancy you see the straight taut form that stood at Bull Run "like a stone wall" and beside him in his tent his young body servant—the one who sleeps in the Northland that Stonewall Jackson fought so bitterly in the War Between the States.

Chapter 11

Bars on the Windows

In Friendship Village stands a big white house that holds a mystery. There are iron bars across some of its windows.

The man who put them there has been dead these 74 years. His name was George W. Robinson and his secret died with him. There is a tradition in the Allegany County village that those barred windows are somehow linked to Robinson's past as a Mormon official during the church's early troubled years in the West.

Robinson was one of three Mormon exiles who came to live the rest of their days in the peaceful village with the reassuring name—after their leader, Joseph Smith, was slain by a mob in Illinois.

The other men were Edward B. Wingate and Sidney Rigdon. Big Ned Wingate, who, like Robinson, had married a Rigdon daughter, was said to have been an officer of the Danites, the secret police set up in Missouri, largely to ferret out heresy and treason in the Mormon ranks.

The name of Sidney Rigdon was a famous one in the early annals of the church. He once had been second in command to Joseph the Prophet. Some have maintained he was the real author of the Book of Mormon, not the unlettered Palmyra farm boy, Joseph Smith. Rigdon had been a minister in Ohio, the finest pulpit orator in the Western Reserve.

But when he came to Friendship around 1847, he was a broken, beaten man, cast out by his church after he had lost

his struggle for the mantle of the slain Joseph to Brigham Young.

In their Southern Tier haven, Robinson, who reputedly had been a fiscal officer, a minor figure in the Mormon hierarchy, became an important man. He built a brick store and a mill and became president of a bank. The villagers called him "General" and his handsome house with the tall gables and the roomy porches at Main and East Water Streets was a showplace of the town.

But no one ever found out what fear drove the prosperous "General" to bar the ground floor rear windows of his home or what treasure he guarded there, not even trusting the vaults of his own bank.

Village gossip, snowballing through generations, has built up tales of secret documents and money bags behind the barred windows.

One story concerns the appearance of two strange men in Friendship. They were looking for the onetime fiscal officer of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Hearing of their visit, Robinson, so the story goes, dashed to his house, grabbed up a satchel and boarded a train for Buffalo. On his return the strangers had left, their mission unexplained. Then the bars went up on the windows of the tall white house.

Another village tradition has Robinson barring his windows because of his fear, an echo of old feuds within the church, that some night some vengeful visitor might come to do him bodily harm, perhaps even take his life. But "the General" was not the type to give way to idle fears. He seems to have been a resolute and forceful individual.

One thing is certain. For whatever reason they may have been placed there, the bars are a reality. I have seen them.

The Robinson house is so constructed that there are two

floors and an attic in the front and three floors in the rear. It is the windows of the roomy ground floor that are barred. The vertical iron bars, painted white, cover one window on the Water Street side and two in the rear.

The residence was built in the 1830s and once served as a store. For years descendants of George Robinson lived in it, first his daughter, Mae, who was the wife of Judge Norton, and later Supreme Court Justice Edward Wingate Hatch, one of the village's most eminent sons, a nephew of "the General." The Roger Hookers live there now.

In the basement is a strong iron door which has nothing to do with Mormon mysteries. It guards what once was Judge Hatch's wine cellar and it was installed after burglars got away with some of the jurist's finest vintages. The racks on which the bottles rested are still there. The fine old house has been remodeled considerably through the years—but the iron bars have never been touched.

Those barred windows provided about the only dramatic touch to the Mormon trio's latter days in the Allegany hills. But they had known plenty of drama earlier, in those tumultuous years in the West when the Saints were driven from place to place, from Zion to Zion, in Ohio, in Missouri and in Illinois—before the Prophet was slain and Sidney Rigdon was brought down by Brigham Young, the onetime Mendon chairmaker, who was destined to lead his people to a Promised Land beside the great Salt Lake.

* * *

The rise and fall of Sidney Rigdon is a story in itself.

During the 1820s when Joseph Smith, the Vermont-born farm boy, was digging for treasure in the drumlins around Palmyra and Manchester and was seeing visions of angels

and golden plates, Rigdon was a successful preacher in his native Pittsburgh, Pa. and later in Ohio. He had left the Baptist faith to join the Campbellite or Disciples movement.

He held pastorates in various Ohio communities and became known as the greatest pulpit orator in the Western Reserve. He preached, among other unorthodox doctrines, a return to the sharing of property in common. In Kirtland, Ohio, he had set up a small communistic colony. Back of a facade of bearded dignity and impressive oratory was an emotional and visionary man. He was given to melodramatic outbursts and was a fanatic on temperance and Sabbath observance.

Word spread Westward of the founding of a new church in Western New York, following the discovery of golden plates in a drumlin near Palmyra, as revealed to Joseph Smith in a vision. Sidney Rigdon was interested in the new movement. After the Mormon Bible was printed in 1830, he sent Parley Pratt as his envoy to Smith, offering his Ohio colony to the new sect. Later Rigdon came East, helped win converts in Western New York with his oratory and personally persuaded Smith to move his small band to Kirtland, which became the first "Zion" of the Mormon church. That is one version. Those who believe Rigdon wrote the Book of Mormon insist he made secret visits to Palmyra before 1830.

At any rate the accession of Sidney Rigdon to the ranks was a feather in the cap of young Joseph Smith and added prestige to the young, struggling church. Rigdon was the first Mormon convert of learning or distinction.

He became an intimate of the Prophet, his religious advisor. Rigdon may have had some idea of taking over the leadership. It was a vain hope. Smith may have stood in some awe of Rigdon's superior erudition at first but he soon took

the measure of the man and the Prophet, the stronger character of the two, always kept the bearded preacher in his place.

There's a story that one Sunday when Smith was wrestling with some of his followers, Rigdon came rushing out, bidding them stop the breaking of the Sabbath. Smith walked over to Rigdon, knocked off his hat, tore his fine coat and sent him scuttling away, humiliated in the eyes of the crowd. Never again did Sidney Rigdon interfere with the affairs of the Prophet.

At Kirtland Smith enlarged Rigdon's small colony and laid out a town site with a store, a bank and a city plan. Rigdon suffered with his leader there and in other "Zions." In Ohio they were tarred and feathered by a mob. There also they were arrested for issuing their own currency.

The star of Rigdon waned after the Mormons moved Westward to Independence, Mo., famed today as the home town of Harry Truman. Rigdon wanted to stay in Ohio. He did not like Missouri or his inferior position in the church.

At Independence and at Far West, Mo., the Mormons incurred the bitter hostility of their Gentile neighbors. Smith, Rigdon and his son-in-law, Robinson, were thrown into prison there. Rigdon's health broke under persecution. He lacked the stamina of a true martyr. Oratory was his forte.

Here is a sample of the bombastic Rigdon style, from a sermon he preached at Far West on July 4, 1838: "That mob that comes on us, it shall be between them and us a war of extermination, for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us. We will carry the seat of war to their houses and their families and one party or the other shall be destroyed."

In a new "Zion" at Nauvoo, Ill., the former Palmyra farm

boy, Joseph Smith, rose to the heights of power. There he built a great temple and Sidney Rigdon delivered the oration at the cornerstone ceremonies. "The City of Joseph" became the largest in Illinois and politicians, Stephen A. Douglas among them, courted the formidable Mormon vote. Smith even had himself nominated for President of the United States, with Rigdon as his running mate.

But Rigdon, although he held his place as one of the three presidents of the church, was then in eclipse. He had much to do with organizing the Danites, the secret police, of which his son-in-law, Ned Wingate, was an officer. Suspicion and dissension were rife among the Saints.

Powerful forces were gathering against Joseph the Prophet from without and within. His system of "plural marriage," to which Rigdon never subscribed, fanned the fires. He broke with Smith when the Prophet approached his daughter, Nancy Rigdon, with a proposal of "celestial marriage." Nancy rejected the offer. When her father confronted the Prophet and accused him, Smith said he was merely "testing Nancy's faith."

That was in 1844, shortly before the bullets of a mob at Carthage jail wrote finis to the meteoric career of Joseph Smith. That event found Rigdon back in Pittsburgh, sulking in his tent.

Learning that Smith and his brother, Hyrum, had been killed and that he was the sole survivor of the presidential triumvirate, Rigdon rushed to Illinois as fast as stage could carry him. He would sway the people with his oratory and claim the mantle of the Prophet.

But another determined man also was speeding Westward. Brigham Young was on his way to Nauvoo from a missionary campaign in New Hampshire. Rigdon reached the Mor-

mon Zion first but not in time to effect his oratorical coup before the arrival of Young.

Even the elements fought against Sidney Rigdon. He addressed the multitude gathered in the Sacred Grove but he lacked his oldtime fire and the howl of the wind all but drowned out his voice.

Then the dynamic Brigham Young mounted the platform and bellowing above the roaring gale, demanded and won the right to lead the Saints as the head of the Twelve Apostles.

Rigdon was excommunicated from the church he had helped to establish and returned to Pittsburgh. Around 1847 he and Wingate moved to Friendship where lived another Rigdon daughter, the wife of Jeremiah Hatch, a non Mormon. At their behest George Robinson joined them and there they lived the rest of their days.

Allegany County was not strange country to Rigdon. In the early days before the Mormon hegira to Ohio, he had conducted a vigorous recruiting campaign in Western New York and was a highly successful proselyter. One of the communities in which he won several converts was Rushford in Northern Allegany County. It is recorded that one Rushford man sold his farm, converted all his means into silver, a peck of it, which he turned over to the church. In a few years he was back, without any silver and disillusioned about the Mormon faith. There were, however, many Western New York converts who remained with the church in the West all the rest of their lives.

Rigdon lived in the center of Friendship Village in a large square house which is still there. He lived quietly and never talked about his career in the Mormon church. He kept no diary, had no library, left no manuscript. He resisted all ef-

forts of interviewers to draw from him the story of his Mormon past. For 39 years he sealed his lips. Records show he once owned a farm on the Friendship-Cuba road and that he was a charter member of the Friendship Masonic Lodge.

Interest in Rigdon and his fellow exiles—and the mystery of the barred windows—has been revived through the publication in 1951 of the historical novel, "Country Salt," by Howard B. Drake, Friendship manufacturer turned author. Drake devotes several pages to the Mormons in his native village.

Rigdon died on July 14, 1876 at the age of 83. He sleeps in the Friendship cemetery, with his wife, Phoebe, and his fellow exiles, Robinson and Wingate. Robinson died in 1878 and Wingate in 1887. "General" Robinson was something of a civic leader in the community. All were respected, law-abiding citizens. The village in the hills was a snug harbor after those stormy days when they suffered with the Saints in the West.

* * *

There is another mystery besides that of the barred windows on the "General's" house.

Did Sidney Rigdon as some historians contend, write the Book of Mormon? That school of thought maintains it could not have been the work of the illiterate Smith.

It is held that Rigdon, while employed in a Pittsburgh printing office, copied a manuscript of a historical romance written by one Solomon Spaulding, expounding the then widely held theory that the American Indians were descended from a lost tribe of Israel; that later Rigdon incorporated the Spaulding story into the Book of Mormon, along with extracts from Scripture and doctrines of his own.

Other historians have pointed out that there is no definite proof that Rigdon ever was in Palmyra or ever met Joseph Smith until after the Mormon Bible was published. Rigdon himself maintained to the last that he had never seen the book until it was handed to him in Ohio in 1830 before he joined the Saints. He died without ever renouncing the Mormon faith.

Questioned shortly before his death by his son, John, Sidney Rigdon is quoted as saying: "Your mother and sisters were present when that book was handed me in Mentor, Ohio, and all I ever knew about the origin of that book was what Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith and the witnesses who claimed they saw the plates have told me."

As far as the Morman faithful are concerned, there is no controversy about the origin of the Book. They know, and there are millions of them, that it is of Divine origin and was "revealed" to Joseph the Prophet.

Chapter 12

"The Big House"

"The Big House" is off the beaten path. The average tourist never sees it, knows naught of its strange story.

One might drive right past the abandoned estate on the outskirts of the village of Wayne, in Steuben County just over the Schuyler line, on the road to Hammondsport, without noticing the stone pillars at the entrance beside the long silent fountain and the now vacant caretaker's lodge. From the Keuka-Wayne highway one catches a glimpse of distant pillars on a hill—if one looks closely.

Occasionally a hunter from one of the cities, seeking game in the hills, comes upon the place and marvels at its magnificence, even in desolation and decay.

For more than a quarter of a century now, "The Big House" has been vacant and the elements and vandals have done their worst. Still an aura of past glory hangs over the mansion with the 24 massive pillars in the Southern plantation style.

It was called "Lake Home" when Samuel Hallett, the railroad builder, lived there. Years later another wealthy occupant named it "The Aisle of Pines" because of the rows of towering trees that line its walks and driveways. But to the neighborhood it is—and has been for years—simply "The Big House."

What a place it must have been in its heyday when lights shone out from the tall windows, when logs blazed in its

many fireplaces, and carriages rolled up the aisles of pines and under the stately porte-cochere.

Now the windows are boarded up. Vandals have ripped the tall green blinds, cut notches in the massive wooden pillars, broken in the mansion to smash its floor-length mirrors and to raise the devil generally.

Few traces remain of the private race track, the swimming pool or the sunken garden. The spacious grounds are yielding to the relentless advance of the brambles and the weeds. Once trim lawns and gardens are reverting to nature.

But the rows of lilac bushes still perfume the air of Spring and the hydrangeas flaunt their delicate pink and white beauty around the pillars in the Fall. The view of three lakes, Keuka, Waneta and Lamoka, from the roof walk is as splendid as of yore.

The elements and the vandals have spared one little corner of the estate. That is the private cemetery, where under a canopy of evergreen, a monument 30 feet high and surmounted by a cross, watches over the graves of the Halletts and their kinfolk, the Mc Dowells.

* * *

In the beginning "The Big House" stood close to the Wayne-Hammondsport highway and not up on the hill.

It was built prior to 1860 and its first occupants were Samuel Hallett and his family. There's a local tradition that a John Mitchell started the mansion but never completed it because a love affair went on the rocks. The Mitchells, the Mc Dowells and the Cranes were the "upper crust" of Wayne in the early days.

Sam Hallett was a native of Canisteo and a self-made man, who married Ann Mc Dowell. His alliance with the Mc-

Dowells enhanced his fortunes. He became interested with the family in lumbering operations and with his brother-in-law, Francis M. Mc Dowell, organized a private bank in Hornellsville (now Hornell). Charles H. Brown, the village barber at Wayne, has a frayed $1 note issued by the private bank of Mc Dowell & Hallett under date of March 15, 1861. He prizes it highly.

Hallett could not have spent much time at his "Lake Home" for his various enterprises were continually taking him all over this country and abroad. He was a bold entrepreneur, an imperious, vital man, handsome with his curly hair and beard.

Soon he sought wider horizons than those of Steuben County. He engaged in the banking business in New York City and promoted and financed some of the early railroads of the West. An associate at one time was John C. Fremont, "the Pathfinder," who failed to find the path to the White House in the election of 1856.

Hallett's banking house financed the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad, reaping a huge commission. It was a major subscriber to government war loans during the Civil War. Hallett visited Europe and South America in the interests of a company promoting a device called the Nautilus submarine diving bell.

He came to know important people and entertained some of them at "Lake Home," where the Halletts lived lavishly, even having a private hunting preserve. James Gordon Bennett, the publisher, was once a guest at the mansion.

In 1863 the firm of Samuel Hallett & Co., with Fremont, bought a controlling interest in the projected Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western Railroad, which became the first section of the Union Pacific. Hallett personally directed building of

the road. When financial difficulties arose, Fremont withdrew and the Western New Yorker carried on alone.

Sam Hallett was in an expansive mood when he left his hotel in Wyandotte, Kans. on July 27, 1864, to set the date for a grand celebration of the opening of his railroad. There was the sudden crackle of a shot and a puff of smoke and a horseman rode away. Hallett lay on the sidewalk mortally wounded. His assassin has been variously described as a discharged employe and as a disgruntled land speculator whose prairie town Hallett's line had skipped. He never was apprehended.

His wife and four children, who had been traveling in Europe, sailed for home on the day he was killed. They were ignorant of his fate until the ship docked in New York. The news prostrated Mrs. Hallett. She was never the same again.

The body of Samuel Hallett was brought home and buried in what is known as the Mc Dowell cemetery on the Keuka-Wayne Road. Soon his widow ordered it reinterred on the estate.

Ann Mc Dowell Hallett, who had been a glittering figure in society, became an inconsolable recluse. Old residents relate that "she took to her bed and remained there for 30 years." She embraced Spiritualism and believed she held daily communications with her late husband.

The children did not remain in Wayne after attaining maturity. Sometimes the grandchildren came back to visit. In her last years the widow had little company save a couple of servants. She died in 1893 and was buried beside her Samuel in the private cemetery on the estate.

Maybe it was because of Mrs. Hallett's strange ways that superstitious folks began calling the place "haunted." For

a long time it was unoccupied and there is always something eerie about a deserted place.

Charley Brown, the Wayne barber, is not a superstitious man but he recalls that when he was a boy, he and a brother went "cooning" (coon hunting) one night on the Hallett place. They took along their hound, a tried and true hunting dog. In the woods near the private cemetery, they heard a strange rustling. The dog, which never before had shown fear of anything, skulked away. They heard no more strange noises. "Of course there was nothing to it. Still it was a curious thing," said Charley Brown.

In the first decade of the 20th Century, a new and splendid era dawned for the old Hallett estate. The air of desolation and mystery vanished with the advent of new residents.

The Hallett heirs gave a 99-year lease to George Kingsley Birge, Buffalo industrialist, who desired the estate for a summer home. He renamed it "The Aisle of Pines," and although he never held title to the place, he lavished a small fortune on it.

George Birge's father had begun his business career in Buffalo with a general store which he developed into a big wall paper business. The son, while carrying on the family business, took over the George N. Pierce bicycle factory in 1896 and two years later began making Pierce-Arrow automobiles. He was president of Pierce-Arrow from its beginning until 1916. He was a civic leader in Buffalo, a patron of the arts and withal a modest and moderate man.

When it came to his treasured "Aisle of Pines" estate, Birge did things on a grand scale. First he had "The Big House," pillars and all, moved from the road to the highest elevation on the property, a considerable distance. It was a stupendous moving job.

Birge had the grounds relandscaped and water piped throughout them. The mansion was remodeled without altering its stately lines. When work was slack elsewhere, Wayne folks could always get work at "The Big House." The old Hallett sheds and stables, arranged in a quadrangle, went down. It was the Automobile Age and limousines (Pierce-Arrows) rolled up the pine-bordered driveways where horses had pranced.

George K. Birge died in Buffalo in 1918. In 1935 the Hallett heirs conveyed to the State of New York. "The Big House" and its 118 acres. One of the Halletts wanted to establish a state home for aged women on the place. There also was talk of a state park there. Nothing happened. Only caretakers lived on the property. The rich furnishings and the big library were sold. The place began to wear a tired look. Gloom had returned to "The Big House."

In 1947 the state sold the estate to an Elmira priest, the Rev. Thomas J. Toole, who has never publicly revealed his future plans for the property. Wayne people talk about a possible camp or school there—but that's only gossip.

Ignoring the sheriff's "No Trespassing" signs, hoodlums have broken into the mansion, smashed the glass doors and the French mirrors, desecrated the stately old showplace.

Maybe "The Big House" is "haunted"—by the ghosts of its palmier days and by all the legends and the memories that whisper through the pine trees on a lonely hill in the Southern Tier.

* * *

Many a legend and many a strange tale belong to the Town of Wayne. It's a mystic sort of countryside, that land of old Indian lakes and noble hills.

Here's a tale that James S. Drake, Jr., Steuben County attorney likes to tell. He calls it "The Story of the Silver Bullet."

It was in the pioneering time and John Teeple lived near where "The Big House" stands today. He was a substantial man among the settlers and was supervisor of the Town of Wayne. He had a daughter, Polly, who was the apple of his eye. One day in the year of 1809 when Polly was 16 years old she was sent on an errand to a neighbor's house. She took her pet dog along. Their path led past the lonely cabin of the Widow Slocum.

The widow was an eccentric. Indeed there were some who said she was a witch. She had been a member of Jemima Wilkinson's religious colony across Keuka Lake, had left the cult of "The Universal Friend," and afterwards lived by herself in the Town of Wayne.

Polly Teeple's dog stopped at the widow's cabin and began to howl long and lugubriously. To the widow that howl was the sign of impending death, and, quivering with rage, she pointed a finger and pronounced this curse on the hapless girl:

"Yes, I shall die—but you, Polly Teeple, you shall never walk again."

Sure enough the girl sickened and took to her bed, paralyzed. John Teeple called in the best doctors but they could do nothing. Finally he consulted a clairvoyant and she told him how to break the curse:

"Make an image of the Widow Slocum in bread dough, then stand it against a basswood tree and at 125 feet pierce it with a silver bullet."

The image was made, Zenas Sackett fashioned the bullet of silver and fired it at the required distance, while more than

100 people watched. Among them were John Teeple's fellow Supervisors. Zenas' aim was good. The silver bullet hit its mark.

Then Polly Teeple rose from her bed and walked again. That night they found the Widow Slocum in the woods. She was hanging from the limb of a basswood tree.

* * *

And there's the plot of land in the Town of Wayne which belongs to the President of the United States. It has for 84 years now.

The deed is recorded, along with thousands of others, in the old stone office of the Steuben County Clerk in Bath. In it, on November 10, 1868, Moses Crookston conveyed "to the President of the United States, because of my natural love and affection for my family, the property herein described, four rods square, in the Town of Wayne, reserving there the right to burial for myself and wife and to be held as a burial place for my children."

The President in 1868 was Andrew Johnson. There is no reason to believe that he or any of his successors have known they held title, during term of office, to a private cemetery on a back road near Keuka Lake in Upstate New York.

Moses Crookston was a prosperous farmer, with vast wheat fields, during the Civil War. The lot he deeded to the Chief Executive was part of his farm on the road that leads over the hills from Keuka to North Urbana.

Crookston's motive is a mystery. Perhaps he sought to insure perpetual care of his burial plot by deeding it to the man in the White House. If so, his hope was vain. Every President from Andy Johnson on has grossly neglected his property in the Town of Wayne.

I would never have found "the President's land" had it not been for Alderman F. Gleason, whose farm and vineyards are on the east side of Keuka Lake on land where his ancestors settled early in the 19th Century. He remembered the private cemetery and volunteered to take me to it, although he had not seen it in years.

He found the site, just off the road, a veritable jungle. After beating the bush for several minutes, Gleason shouted: "Here it is." I plunged into the thicket and finally came upon him and the well-hidden burial place, with its 11-foot-high marble obelisk with a stone base, surrounded by an ornate iron fence.

On the monument are the names of "Moses Crookston, who died Jan. 23, 1878, aged 72" and "his wife, Sarah, who died Nov. 15, 1868, aged 70 years." There also is this epitaph on the shaft:

"Our parents—
Our father and mother are gone;
They lay beneath the sod.
Dear parents, although we miss you much,
We know you rest with God."

No other Crookstons are buried there, despite Moses' desire, as stated in the deed, that the plot "be held as a burial place for my children."

Perhaps the new President of the United States will clear the jungle from his land in the Town of Wayne. If he ever wants to look over his property, he had better first enlist the services of "Aldy" Gleason as an explorer.

Chapter 13

"He Was Faithful"

Fate has not been kind to the memory of William Henry Seward.

It is sheer irony that the statesman from Upstate New York is doomed to wander eternally down the path of history in the mightier shadow of a man he considered his intellectual inferior and who snatched from him the prize he so desperately wanted, the Presidency of the United States—that today William H. Seward is identified in the public mind, if he is remembered at all, merely as Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State. A few may also recall his cut-rate purchase of Alaska for Uncle Sam.

Yet the brilliant and ambitious Auburn politico-lawyer cast a massive shadow himself in his lifetime. From 1831, when at the age of 30 he entered the State Senate, to his death in 1872, two years after he had completed an eight-year tenure as Secretary of State, he was constantly in the public eye and most of the time in public office.

He served two terms as Governor of New York and two terms in the United States Senate, largely through the tireless efforts of his political partner and intimate friend, Thurlow Weed, the Whig boss of New York. Seward rose to the national leadership of the anti-slavery Whigs and after the Republican party was formed, he became its outstanding figure.

He was the "Mr. Republican" of 1860 and all signs

pointed to his being the party's Presidential nominee that year. But he had been in public life so long, had taken so many stands, had made so many speeches and so many enemies that he was passed over for the more "available" and less vulnerable Lincoln of Illinois.

Of all the speeches Seward made, two phrases from them have survived the years. In the great Senate debate of 1850 over extension of slavery to new states, Seward rose to oppose compromise and to declare that "there is a higher law than the Constitution." And in a speech in 1859 in Rochester's old Corinthian Hall, the Auburnian used the memorable words, "irrepressible conflict," in warning of impending civil war.

Seward had a ready flow of words and plenty of aplomb. He was equally at ease with titled diplomats or backwoodsmen. He was slim, blue-eyed, sandy haired, with a beardless sallow face and beetling eyebrows. His eagle beak of a nose was his most prominent feature. When in thoughtful mood, he would cock his head on one side, "like a wise macaw," as one historian put it.

He was careless in his dress, forever spilling ashes from his eternal cigar. He was a cultivated man but never stuffy. Although he traveled widely he never wanted to live anywhere but in Auburn. His old mansion there has recently been converted into a Seward Museum.

William H. Seward was a successful lawyer, skilled in the intricacies of that profession and formidable in the court room. In politics he was a realist and once defined a political party as "a joint stock association in which those who contribute most direct the action and management of the concern." He could shift his position or sidestep an issue with the dexterity of a trained acrobat. He was a business-minded public official, essentially conservative in economic matters.

Thus a picture emerges of an adroit politician, a foxy lawyer, a smart manipulator. That is oversimplification and not the whole picture. Seward was a complex personality. There was an idealistic streak in his makeup. At times he was impulsive. His nature was basically warm under the politician's mask.

Many times in his public career he demonstrated his sympathy for "the under dog." He was a sincere and lifelong enemy of slavery. As Governor he championed the cause of the immigrants who were crowding into the cities and of the Anti-Renters in their rebellion against the feudal patroons of Eastern New York.

The critical might say those acts were tinged with politics. There was no politics in what may be called Seward's finest hour. It was in 1846 and he was practicing law in Auburn, in a lull in his political activities between the Governorship and the Senate. Then the compassionate, humanitarian side of his nature was clearly revealed.

Without any possibility of material reward and at the risk of bodily harm to himself and at tremendous cost to his prestige and popularity, the former Governor for many months gave his time, his energy and his talents to saving from the gallows a poor demented young Negro murderer—while the whole countryside was howling for the Negro's blood.

That was William H. Seward at his best—not the wily politician but the humanitarian with a deep pity and a burning hatred of injustice in his heart.

His client's name was William Freeman, born in Cayuga County in 1824 of a Negro father who had been reared in slavery and of a half Indian, half Negro mother. His Indian blood gave him a roving instinct and he did not stay long on

one job nor did he tolerate restraint. But generally he was a youth of average intelligence and normal habits.

When he was 16 years old, he was falsely accused of stealing a horse. He was sent to Auburn Prison for five years on the testimony of the man who later turned out to be the real thief.

The injustice of the sentence rankled within William Freeman. In prison he protested his innocence repeatedly. He was hard to manage and was often disciplined. During one flogging Freeman fought back and the guard struck the Negro youth a brutal blow over the head with a board.

That blow made him permanently deaf and changed his whole personality. He became a dull, brooding, incoherent, child-like moron given to sudden fits of rage. That was the William Freeman turned loose on society in September of 1845.

After his release he worked at odd jobs in and around Auburn. He babbled incessantly of the five years he had spent in prison for a crime he did not commit, of the beating by the guard and he said over and over: "They must pay for it." He never specified who "they" were but the thing preyed on his mind until he twice went to a magistrate vainly seeking warrants for "the folks who sent him to prison."

The early months of 1846 found Freeman boarding with a Negro washerwoman in what was called New Guinea, one mile south of Auburn. He paid for his keep by carrying her baskets of clothes to and from the village.

Two and one half miles farther south, in the Town of Fleming on the west shore of Owasco Lake in a frame house that still stands, lived a prosperous and respected 41-year-old farmer. His name was John G. Van Nest and like many of his neighbors he was of Dutch descent. In his household were

his wife, Sarah; her mother, Mrs. Phebe Wyckoff; a daughter and two sons, the youngest not quite two years old.

There is no evidence that Freeman had ever known the Van Nests or that any of them had anything to do with sending him to prison.

Owasco Lake and its shores were bathed in moonlight when at 9:30 on the night of March 12, 1846, a young Negro with a butcher knife in his hand and senseless murder in his heart approached the Van Nest farmhouse. He found Mrs. Van Nest standing in the rear yard and he plunged the knife into her breast without warning. She was fatally wounded but managed to stagger into the house, screaming.

Her husband, in the living room, heard her shriek and as he turned to the door, the Negro struck. Van Nest was stabbed to death before he could resist. The mad butchery continued. The 70-year-old widow Wyckoff was twice stabbed although she fought back bravely and in her fight wounded the Negro on the wrist with her own kitchen knife. The infant Van Nest son, George Washington, was stabbed to death in his bed.

The others of the household fled to safety, all but Cornelius Van Arsdale, who was spending the night there. When the slayer came up stairs, Van Arsdale tussled with him and although wounded, threw a candlestick at the Negro and sent him tumbling down the stairs. From the kitchen he drove the maniac out with a broomstick.

The slayer stole a horse from the Van Nest barn and galloped away in the moonlight. Soon he abandoned that horse and took another. The next morning William Freeman was picked up in Oswego County, 30 miles from the farmhouse which he had turned into a bloody shambles.

Freeman acknowledged his guilt with idiotic indifference,

laughed in the faces of his captors when asked why he had killed the Van Nests. He was brought back in chains to the scene of the crime and faced a magistrate in the Van Nest farmhouse, where he was charged with murder.

An angry crowd had gathered. The Van Nests had been popular and the cold-blooded killing had aroused the countryside. The crowd's wrath grew with word that the fourth victim, Mrs. Wyckoff, had just died. There were cries of "lynch him," and "kill the Negro now" and the sheriff had difficulty getting his prisoner back safely in Auburn jail.

Three days later, four caskets were carried out of the old brick Reformed Protestant Dutch Church which still stands at the crossroads near the foot of Owasco Lake. The four victims were laid to rest in the little Sand Beach cemetery with so many Dutch names on its headstones.

A long low headstone, with lilies of the valley clustering about its base, today marks the burial place of the three Van Nests, with these words engraved upon their tomb: "All murdered on the night of March 12, 1846." Nearby is the headstone at the grave of the fourth victim.

Their funeral drew another tense and sullen crowd. Its ugly mood was inflamed by the minister's funeral sermon which wound up with:

"I appeal to this vast assembly to maintain the laws of their country inviolate and cause the murderer to be punished."

Copies of that sermon were widely distributed. The newspapers played up the story and interest in the case spread beyond Cayuga County. The Auburn jail was well guarded, for there were those who would have strung up William Freeman without any legal formalities.

* * *

Such was the situation when a few days after the crime, "Governor" Seward, as he was known in Auburn, came home from a business trip to Albany.

At the time Seward had an appeal pending from the conviction of Henry Wyatt, an Auburn Prison convict who had slain a fellow prisoner in 1845. The lawyer had been moved by the sight of Wyatt manacled to the prison floor and believing the convict mentally irresponsible, had volunteered to defend him through a plea of insanity.

Friends warned Seward not to intervene in the Freeman case. They told him of the temper of the public and urged him not to jeopardize his political career. Seward listened and kept his own counsel.

He visited the prisoner in his cell. He found him unable to carry on a coherent conversation. Seward's sense of justice was outraged that one so obviously unbalanced should be railroaded to the gallows. He demanded a jury trial of Freeman's sanity. Should the Negro be found insane, he would be committed to an asylum for the rest of his life. If found sane, he would be tried.

Seward's course was not a popular one. Hotheads wanted no delay in the execution of the slayer of four innocent people in cold blood—whether he was insane or not. On a return from a trip, Seward was met at the railroad station by friends who came to warn and protect him. A mob gathered in front of the Seward mansion and made some ugly threats before dispersing. Taunts and threats from a hostile crowd greeted the former Governor of New York as he walked the streets of Auburn.

Outwardly unruffled, Seward fought for two hectic weeks to have his client declared insane. He produced a long list of witnesses, with several physicians among them. Freeman

bolstered his own case by his vacant stare and general indifference to the proceedings.

But Seward lost his fight. A lone juror who held out against a sanity verdict was privately lectured by the presiding judge. That juror yielded to the extent that he joined in a verdict which declared "the prisoner sufficiently sane in mind and memory to distinguish between right and wrong."

The trial of William Freeman for murder was moved for immediate trial despite Seward's demand for delay. When the Negro faced the court and was asked by the district attorney if he had counsel, Freeman mumbled: "I don't know."

Then William H. Seward rose, pale and determined, to announce:

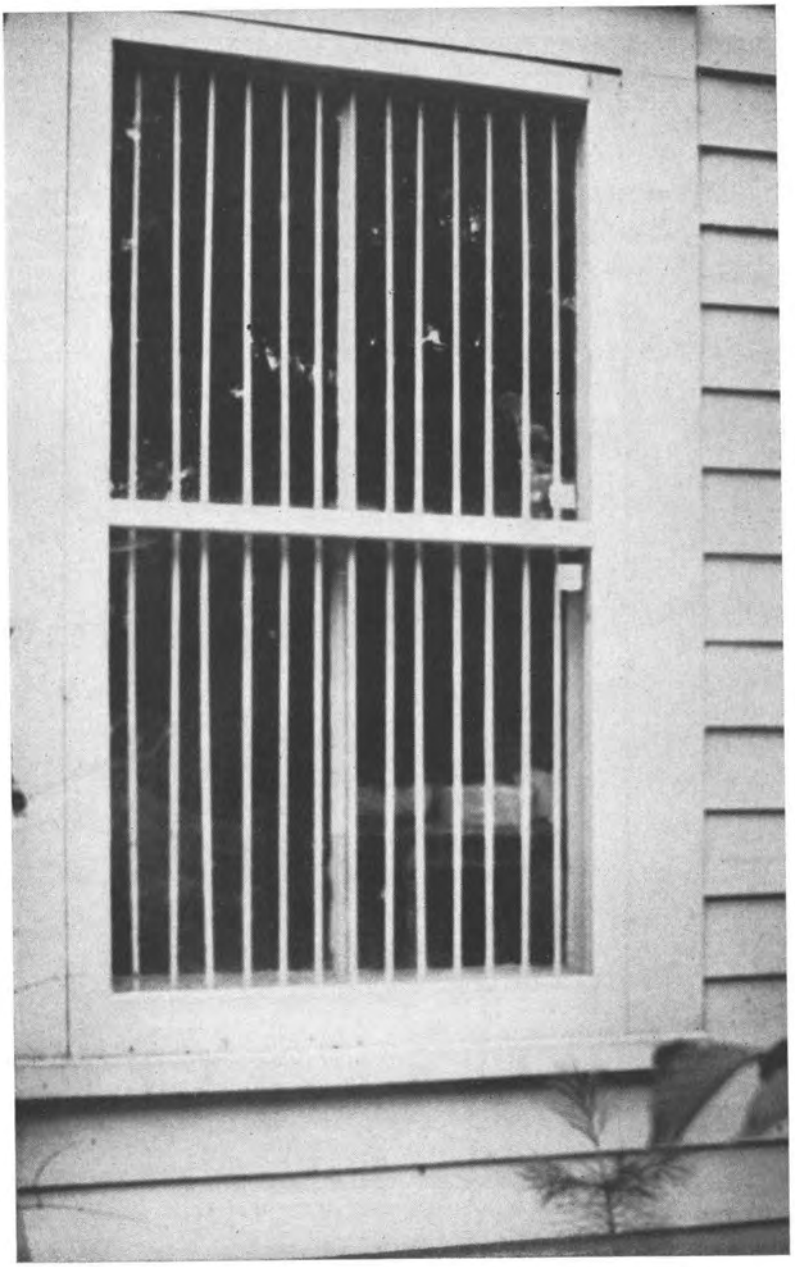
"May it please the court, I shall remain counsel for the prisoner until his death."

Throughout sultry July of 1846 the battle went on in Auburn court house. Before a crowd openly hostile, Seward fought skillfully every step of the way. The sanity of the prisoner was the main issue and both sides called many witnesses, medical and lay.

At the close of the trial, Seward's summation was a lengthy, careful and masterly review of the evidence. It also contained the most impassioned utterances of his life. Here is his peroration, uttered in that curious husky voice of his:

"I plead not for a murderer. I have no inducement, no motive to do so. I have addressed my fellow citizens in many various relations when rewards of wealth and fame awaited me. I have been cheered on other occasions by manifestations of popular approbation and sympathy and when there was no such encouragement, I had at least the gratitude of those whose cause I defended.

"But I speak now in the hearing of people who have been



Bars on the Old Home of Mormon Exile at Friendship

"The Big House," Deserted Mansion on a Lonely Hill at Wayne

prejudiced against this prisoner and who condemn me for speaking in his behalf.

"He is a convict, a pauper, a Negro, without intellect, sense or emotion. I am not the prisoner's lawyer. I am indeed a volunteer in his behalf but Society and Mankind have the deepest interests. I am the lawyer for Society and for Mankind, shocked beyond the power of expression at the scene I have witnessed here, of trying a maniac as a malefactor. There is not a white man or a white woman who would not have been dismissed long since from the peril of such a prosecution."

On behalf of the state, Attorney General John Van Buren, son of a former President, answered Seward with the effective argument that "the peace of the community is the sole issue here and if a crime of this magnitude is to go unpunished and thus to invite imitation, it is your hearth stones . . . that will be drenched in blood."

The verdict was guilty. Seward had lost again. On July 24, 1846 William Freeman, who could not even comprehend the words of the sentence, was sentenced to be hanged on September 18.

Seward did not give up. He carried an appeal to the higher court at Rochester and won a new trial. But before the second trial ever convened William Freeman was called before a higher tribunal. They found the Negro dead in his cell on August 21, 1847.

After it was all over, Seward wrote these words, which are in his autobiography:

"Perhaps years hence when the passion and excitement which agitate this community shall have passed away, some wandering stranger, some lone exile . . . may erect over my

remains a humble stone and thereon put this epitaph: 'HE WAS FAITHFUL.' "

In a shady dell of Auburn's Fort Hill Cemetery is a plain, tablet-like stone. On its front is the simple inscription: "William H. Seward, born May 16, 1801. Died October 10, 1872."

In the rear of the stone rises a short ornamented urn. At its base is this legend:

HE WAS FAITHFUL

Chapter 14

Why They Didn't Vote

The late James W. Wadsworth of Geneseo liked to tell this story of his first political campaign:

Back in 1904 when he first ran for the Assembly from Livingston County, "Young Jim," following the advice of his experienced Congressman father, went out into all corners of the district to talk with the voters.

The reception he received in one community puzzled him no end. The people listened courteously enough but none of them promised him any votes. He soon learned that these future constituents were the Covenanters of York, who adhering to religious principles centuries old, abstained from voting at all.

Out around the pleasant village of York, whose Main Street dips and rises like a roller coaster, there was until a few years ago a considerable group that shunned the polling places. Now there are few, if any, non-voters in the township. The old generations of unbending Covenanters are no more.

The so-called Covenanters are members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church which goes back to the Second Reformation in Scotland in the 17th Century.

York was the last stronghold of the church in Western New York. The congregation disbanded in 1933 and the white frame church with the slender spire on the village Main Street was torn down two years later. Most of the one-time Covenanters have since affiliated with the United Pres-

byterian Church. Still a lot of people up that way are descendants of the Covenanters and many were reared in that rugged faith.

Here was no strange religious cult with fantastic dress and fanatical rites. The Covenanters of York were no different from their neighbors, except for their abstinence from voting and holding office. They were hard-working, thrifty folk, mostly Scots with a sprinkling of Irish, who paid their taxes, obeyed the laws, fought their country's wars and generally were exemplary citizens.

They were called Covenanters because they believed that churches and nations should enter into solemn covenants with the Almighty. They held the Law of God to be the supreme law of nations and Jesus Christ the Supreme Ruler, above civil or ecclesiastical authority.

Through long years of suppression, prosecution and struggle in the Old Country, they resisted every effort of bishops, kings and lords to impose upon them a state church.

When the United States adopted a Constitution which failed to mention the sovereignity of the Deity but which established "We, the People" as the source of authority, the Covenanters who had settled in America could not go along with it and refused to take part in such a form of government.

They came from a long line of dissenters and fighters for liberty, from Scots who had supported the Reformation. Their banners were bathed in the blood of martyrs. One was a Scottish nobleman, Patrick Hamilton, who had visited Martin Luther at Wittenberg and died at the stake for his beliefs. They rallied behind John Knox who saved Protestantism for Scotland in the 16th Century.

They suffered under Mary, Queen of Scots, who restored

the Catholic bishops. When in 1563, the Episcopal Church was made the Established Church of England, they became Presbyterian dissenters. In 1580 they drew up the First National Covenant, a solemn bond for maintenance of the Reformed faith and they resisted every attempt of King James I to overthrow it.

When Charles I sought to compel them to subscribe to the Episcopal English liturgy and a dean tried to read that service in St. Giles kirk in Edinburgh, they hurled stools and books at his head until he desisted. The land rose in revolt and in 1638 the Solemn League and Covenant was signed by 60,000 for the defense of their independent religion. Many signed it with their own blood.

When the next year Charles sent an army into Scotland, they sprang to arms under the blue banner of the Covenanters and sang the Psalms of David in their tents. The invaders withdrew without bloodshed.

In later years plenty of blood flowed. The Scotch dissenters of 1680 nailed their declaration of independence to the market cross at Sanguhar. They battled Royalist armies and knew defeat. Their pastors were exiled, their forbidden meetings were held in secluded glens but the oppressed Scots never yielded their convictions although 18,000 of them died for the cause.

Thus in the Old Country the Covenanters kept inviolate the faith of their fathers. They brought their unyielding principles with them to the New World and for generations they never voted in American elections. With them it was a matter of conscience and with a Scot conscience transcends all else.

Among the Scots who settled in what is now the northwestern corner of Livingston County were many of the Cove-

nanter faith. They chose the rolling and fertile countryside around York for their new home.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church was organized there in 1825. As early as 1815 there were meetings in the region, many of them in barns. Arthur B. Donnan, York town historian and a descendant of Covenanters, retells a tale that came down from his grandmother that at one of the early meetings she was holding a baby on her lap when a cat jumped down from a hay mow, frightening the baby so that it took a long time to restore the calm of the Covenanter meeting.

Later on, services were held in two nearby schoolhouses before the first permanent house of worship was built in 1833 on the York-Pavilion Road. It still stands, remodeled into a residence. In 1871 the white church was erected in the village and it was used until the Covenanters disbanded. Once there were 200 on its rolls—quite a bloc of nonvoters in one rural township.

Strict observance of the Lord's Day was a keystone of the Covenanter creed. Saturday afternoons and evenings were devoted to preparations for the morrow so that only the most essential work was left for the Sabbath. Men shaved and shined their boots on Saturday nights. Even the Scotch housewives, with whom tidiness was a fetish, left their dishes unwashed on the Sabbath. Because trains ran on Sunday, Covenanters would not buy railroad stocks.

The Sunday services must have seemed interminable to restless Covenanter youth. Between two long sermons there was an intermission during which the children were fed cookies and the horses oats. It was like a Eugene O'Neill play.

Many families walked to kirk and in the short Fall and Winter days, darkness fell upon the hills before many of

them reached their homes. Following a custom of the Old Country, some of the early Covenanter women, bound for church in their Sunday best, walked through the mud or dust barefooted, carrying their shoes and stockings, which they donned on entering the House of the Lord.

Close Communion was observed and preparatory services were held on the eve of Communion so that each might be worthy to come to the Table of the Lord. Credentials or tokens were given to each communicant on Saturday, to be handed to an elder, as he or she marched to the Table, bearing a Psalm Book and singing the 24th Psalm. The custom went back to the old bitter days in Scotland when tokens of lead were required as identification to prevent spies or enemies entering the forbidden services.

Monday morning following Communion found the Covenanters again in their pews, listening to the final sermon of the Communion service. That also was a custom born of early days in Scotland.

Two or three fast days were observed each year and were kept as holy as the Sabbath. Each child had to learn the catechism and once a year the pastor and an elder called to catechize. These visits must have struck dread to some young Covenanter hearts.

The Covenanters banned instrumental music in their services and used the Psalms of David exclusively. Transgressors were "sessioned," that is, haled before the session of the church and reprimanded. Those who attended a service of some other denomination when they might have gone to Covenanter worship were disciplined.

With these earnest people, use of liquor, tobacco and profanity was taboo. They frowned on secret, oath-bound societies and they worked for the abolition of human slavery.

They were loyal to the Union in the Civil War but they did not vote—not even for the Emancipator.

In Livingston County court records is this item, dated 1868: "Samuel Bowden of York was fined $15 for non attention to jury duty. He was excused and his money was refunded when it was learned he was the minister of the Covenanter Church."

The Covenanter flock in York was the last in Western New York. Once there was a flourishing congregation in Clyde and in the late 1880s a Reformed Presbyterian Church on Rochester's Alexander Street. The sect still maintains the well-known Geneva College at Beaver Falls, Pa.

If James W. Wadsworth were alive and running for office now, he would be assured of York votes, lots of them. The old Covenanters are gone. But while their descendants have abandoned the old inflexible customs, they have not lost the love of liberty or the rugged courage that kept the blue banner of the Covenant waving through dark days of old in Scotland's hills and glens.

You should hear Arthur Donnan of York quote from Bobby Burns, as only a Scotsman can:

"The Solemn League and Covenant,
To some a smile, to some a tear,
But sacred freedom, lo, was theirs;
If thou art a slave, withhold thy sneer."

Chapter 15

The Glamor of Great Names

The farming-rock salt mining township of York in the Genesee Valley seems far removed from the glamor that surrounds the White House and Presidents and First Ladies.

York is a ducal sort of name yet the Livingston County town was not named for any noble house but for the North Country Assemblyman who sponsored the legislation which created it in 1819.

Its rolling terrain is good farmland and also contains the largest rock salt mine in the world. But those things don't add up to glamor.

Still in York Township stand at least three buildings which are links with the lives of at least three First Families of the land.

One is a mansion, not old as buildings go in the Valley of the Genesee. It is on a back road and it is almost hidden in the woods. There once a President of the United States and his famous daughter came to ride to hounds in "The Valley of the Northern Bluegrass." There also some First Ladies of the American stage once were guests.

There is another mansion, of older, more stately vintage, that for a century has faced the winding Genesee in its lovely valley. On a window pane in that house a woman who had been the mistress of the White House scratched her name with a diamond ring—and the name is still there after more than 80 years.

And in York village is a long low brick building which is nearly 130 years old. It is vacant now. In its time it served as a residence and as a storage and repair shop for town machinery. But it began as a district schoolhouse and there is a historical marker in front of it—because once a future President of the United States conned his boyhood lessons there.

* * *

Wolcott Road, near Craig's Station beside the main line tracks of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, seems to the casual traveler just another side road. One could travel it and not even see the mansion which sits far back from the highway and is well hidden by trees and shrubbery.

When you go up its long and winding drive, the first view of Hillcrest is breath-taking. You never expected to see such an elaborate estate in such a back road setting.

Some mighty famous people have traveled that same tree-lined drive. One was Theodore Roosevelt. The Rough Rider came first before the turn of the century when he was Governor of New York. Later on, when he was President, he and his daughter, Alice, cantered up that path after riding in the Genesee Valley Hunt at Geneseo. It is not often that a President visits an off-the-beaten-path community like York and older residents still talk about seeing Teddy and Alice riding horseback over the hills.

Many other celebrities were guests at Hillcrest in the days when Mrs. Frances Wolcott was mistress of the mansion, for she was a cultivated, widely traveled lady who had mingled with the great at home and abroad.

It was her bachelor-brother, Doctor Metcalf, who built the house in 1898–99 but his sister soon took it over. She

was the wife of a wealthy United States Senator from Colorado, Edward O. Wolcott. The senator never lived at Hillcrest. By the time it was built he and his wife had reached the parting of the ways.

An imposing country estate took shape on acres that the thrifty Scotch pioneers had tilled for years. The first story of the main residence was built of stone and the second story of brown shingles. It is a rambling place with 27 rooms, including 17 bedrooms, 5 fireplaces and a central room 40 by 70 feet. Add to that an eight-room guest house, barns, stables, a swimming pool and bath house, a tennis court, formal flower gardens and 25 acres of lawn and woodland and you have Hillcrest, as it was in the beginning and as it is today.

In that lavish setting Frances Wolcott, born to the best society of Buffalo, entertained lavishly. Her guests might almost be called a cross section of "Who's Who" in the early days of this century.

One was August Belmont, the New York financier, owner of one of the vast fortunes of America and with him to Hillcrest came the lovely girl he was then courting and whom he later married, the actress Eleanor Robson.

Mrs. Wolcott's team of chestnuts with white manes and tails and tan-colored harness, to match a carriage of natural wood, was a familiar sight in York in the early 1900s. One day the carriage swept up to the combination village post-office and general store and from it stepped a stranger. Her personality was as vivid as her costume—a red cape and hood.

That was Ethel Barrymore's first appearance in York. She came several times in later years and autographed pictures of the stage star once adorned the rooms of Hillcrest.

On the grand piano in the central room once stood the

head, in bronze, of another First Lady of the stage. Katharine Cornell and Mrs. Wolcott were native Buffalonians and intimate friends.

Another guest at Hillcrest was Karl Bitter, eminent sculptor. During one of his visits he did a life-size profile in medium relief of Edward Knox, a former slave who for a quarter of a century was the caretaker of the estate. Bitter also used as a model another resident of Hillcrest, an imported Brown Swiss bull. In the central room may still be seen Bitter's plaster model depicting the signing of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty.

A frequent visitor at Hillcrest was Devereaux Milburn, the polo star, who in his youth liked to go coon hunting in the woods around York. His mother was a York girl, Mary Stocking, and his father was John G. Milburn, the Buffalo attorney in whose Delaware Avenue mansion President McKinley died after he was shot at the Pan-American Exposition. Which is another, even if rather remote, link between the Town of York and the lives of American Presidents.

Older Yorkers remember the time in 1904 when Mrs. Wolcott converted the huge cow barn into a theater and some stage luminaries appeared in a grand theatrical, probably in the strangest setting in which they had ever displayed their talents. It was followed by an equally grand reception. The rural neighbors for miles around were invited to the show but the reception was more exclusive and limited to the house guests and the elite of the Valley.

The entertainment was a welcome home from their honeymoon in Europe to Mrs. Wolcott's son, Lyman M. Bass, and his bride. Bass was a son by a former marriage to Lyman K. Bass who once was a law partner of Grover Cleveland in Buffalo.

After Mrs. Wolcott's death, the Basses lived at Hillcrest. They maintained the estate in all its immaculate magnificence but its days of lavish entertainment were done. In recent years the estate has entered a new era. It is operated as a haven for tourists and summer vacationists.

Maybe those who journey to the mansion in the woods in its new incarnation will feel the presence of those other (nonpaying) guests of long ago—Theodore Roosevelt, all grins and gusto as he tells of a "bully day" of riding to hounds; daughter Alice of the tart tongue and unconventional ways; Ethel Barrymore in her Red Riding Hood attire; rich August Belmont and queenly Eleanor Robson; Katharine Cornell, talking with her hostess about girlhood days in Buffalo; Karl Bitter modeling Knox, the former slave, and the prize bull.

* * *

In the Valley of the Genesee there are many manor houses. They bear distinctive names, such as Hartford House, the Homestead, Sweet Briar, Bellewood. Once there was Bleak House. But Bleak House is no more. It went up in flames two decades ago. They are the manor houses of the landed gentry, of the hunting squires, of the old families, the Wadsworths, the Chandlers, the Chanlers, the Buckleys.

Westerly is the name Porter Chandler, the New York lawyer, chose for his estate near Piffard in the Town of York—because it lies on the westerly side of the valley where he was born.

Before his time it was known as the Charles Wadsworth place and in those days some of the finest Short Horn cattle in America cropped the grass in the river bottoms.

Under spreading oaks and tall hickory trees stands the

century-old mansion in its warm coat of yellow. It is a stately house with a big vine-covered porch, a pillared porte-cochére, a graceful old-fashioned doorway, tall end-chimneys and green blinds at every window.

On one of the windows long ago a woman who had been mistress of the White House scratched her name with a diamond ring. The name, "Julia G. Tyler," is still there.

We must backtrack in history a bit to account for the presence in rural Western New York of the widow of John Tyler, 10th President of the United States.

It was in 1844 that Tyler, then in his 51st year and two years after the death of his first wife in the White House, met—under tragic circumstances—22-year-old Julia Gardiner, comely daughter of an old New York family.

On Washington's Birthday of that year both were members of a large and brilliant party that boarded the new warship, the Princeton, pride of the United States Navy, at Alexandria, Va., for a cruise down the Potomac to Mount Vernon.

At the start of the return trip, the ship's guns fired a salute. One gun exploded, killing five of the party including two Cabinet members and former State Senator David Gardiner, Julia's father.

The middle-aged widower President was attracted to the fatherless young girl and there ensued a brief and formal courtship, in keeping with the suitor's high position and the disparity in the ages of the two. John Tyler and Julia Gardiner were quietly married in New York City on July 25, 1844. The young bride presided skillfully over the social life of the White House during the remaining seven months of Tyler's turbulent term of office.

John Tyler, the Virginia planter, at heart a state's rights

Democrat although he was elected as a Whig and who was the first Vice President to become President through death of the incumbent, died in 1862 while serving in the Confederate Congress.

He fathered 15 children, eight by his first wife and seven by his second. The third child of the second marriage, born in 1849, was named Julia after her mother. In 1869 she married William H. Spencer, Jr. son of the pioneer merchant who had built Westerly in 1850.

Young Spencer and his bride lived in the Genesee Valley manor house for at least one year. In the Spring of 1871 the widowed Julia Gardiner Tyler came there to care for her daughter who was expecting a child.

It was during that stay that she scratched her name on the window. She started her name on a second pane but did not finish it. Maybe she did it in a moment of loneliness or abstraction, for the Genesee Valley was a quiet place for one used to the glitter of Washington and Virginia society.

A few hours after Julia Spencer gave birth to a daughter, the mansion caught fire from a defective fireplace and she and her new-born babe were carried from the blazing home. A bucket brigade quickly put out the fire but shock and exposure cost the life of a daughter of a President. The fireplace, which was blamed for the tragedy, was not used for 50 years.

The motherless baby, christened Julia, was adopted by an aunt who lived for a time at Westerly. Never again did the former First Lady visit the mansion in the Valley, fraught with such sad memories.

But her name is still there on the window pane.

* * *

There's another "presidential" building in the Town of York. It's older than the mansions but it is neither stately nor glamorous. It has a tired look.

The long one-story brick building has stood near York Four Corners, a little back from the main street, for 130 years and it has served many purposes. Now it is vacant. Until a few years ago it was a storage place for town highway machinery. Before that it was a dwelling. It began life as a district schoolhouse and for half a century it was such. In York they still call it "Old Brick School No. 8."

Today there is an historical marker in front of it—because among the hundreds of boys and girls who crossed its worn door sill was one who attained the highest place to which any native-born American may aspire.

That pupil was Chester Alan Arthur and he became the 21st President of the United States.

He was seven years old when in 1837 he first enrolled in that old Brick School. He was a sturdy, dark-eyed boy with pleasant manners. But aside from whatever prestige he enjoyed as a minister's son there was nothing to set him apart from his schoolmates. His father, a Baptist preacher who never stayed long in any one community, was far from wealthy.

The Rev. William Arthur, a native of Ulster, was a Scotch-Irishman, born an Episcopalian. After emigrating to Canada, he abandoned the study of law to become a Baptist minister following his conversion to that faith at a revival meeting. His wife was Malvina Stone, descendant of New Hampshire pioneers of English stock.

Preacher Arthur held pastorates in several New England villages. In one of them, Fairfield, Vt., in 1830, Chester Alan, the second son, was born. Two years later the family moved

to the Western New York village of Perry. "Elder" Arthur served the Baptists there for five years and the white house in which baby Chester played still stands in Perry's Elm Street.

In 1837 the Reverend Arthur accepted a call to the Baptist church in nearby York. There he found many settlers of his own Scotch-Irish blood. He was a medium sized, dark-haired man who walked with a limp. An eloquent and often fiery preacher, he spoke his mind and did not possess the conciliatory ways of his famous son.

The Arthurs lived in a little house, long since gone from the scene, on the York Landing Road. The Baptist church in which William Arthur preached burned in 1909.

Local histories insist the Arthurs lived in York until 1842. President Arthur's biographer, George F. Howe, has the family moving to Union Village, near Saratoga Springs, in 1839. Few records are extant to tell of the Arthurs' stay in York, but in the little cemetery at "the Forks," just outside the village, is a plain marble slab which bears this inscription:

> George, Son of William and Malvina Arthur
> Born in 1836. Died in March 1839.

In a little wayside cemetery in the Genesee Country sleeps a brother of a President.

The Arthur biography relates this incident of Chester Arthur's boyhood which reveals some traits that characterized his future course in politics:

"When Chester was a boy, you might see him in the village street after a shower, watching other boys build a mud dam across the rivulet in the roadway. Pretty soon he would be ordering this one to bring stones, another sticks and others sod to finish the dam. They would all do his bidding without

question. But he took good care not to get any of the dirt on his own hands."

History has not been too kind to Chester A. Arthur. He is remembered as the "spoilsman boss" in Roscoe Conkling's greedy, hard-boiled New York State Republican machine and not as the President who rose above partisanship and was by no means the least able of our Chief Executives.

After the death of the martyred James A. Garfield elevated the erstwhile boss of New York City to sudden power, a friend remarked: "My God! Chet Arthur President of the United States!"

That estimate was unfair to the twenty-first President. He was no ordinary machine politician. He was a successful and affluent lawyer who played politics as a fascinating side line. He was a cultured, well read, fastidious gentleman who always "took care not to get any of the dirt on his own hands."

It is a far cry from the Old Brick School and the little parsonage on the York Landing Road to the White House and the fashionable society which Chester A. Arthur graced in his adult years—from the barefoot schoolboy, the itinerant preacher's son in homespun, to the tall, portly lawyer-politico in the frock coat, with the magnificent burnsides and the polished manners, the most sartorially elegant of all our Presidents.

Chapter 16

Lost Utopia

The City of Harmonia in the mystic vale of Kiantone was like no other city on this earth. It got its charter from heaven. It was governed by the shades of the departed great. Old Ben Franklin was its celestial "Mayor."

It was conceived as a modern Utopia, the perfect social state where there was to be no war, no crime, no disease, no poverty.

It was a grand and fantastic dream. In the vision, revealed a century ago to John Murray Spear, humanitarian, mystic and Spiritualist medium, there "would arise in a scene of natural beauty, noble temples, great universities and stately halls of art, all conceived in an architecture of hitherto unknown beauty."

Rich in natural beauty was the chosen site for this Never Never Land, in the valley along the winding Kiantone Creek called the Prendergast Flats, in the shadow of the great hills that line the York State-Pennsylvania border, seven miles southwest of Jamestown.

But instead of "noble temples" and "stately halls" there arose, smack on the state line, seven circular wooden structures of curious design. The last of them vanished four decades ago. A Summer cabin occupies its site.

Another cabin is built over the entrance to the tunnel that the fanatical inhabitants of the dream city dug into the hill-

side in 1858 in search of the buried treasure of a prehistoric race.

The magic mineral spring which gave the colony being still sends its pungent odor through the glade. And some of the English osiers, the willows used for basket making, that the Spiritualists planted in the heyday of their city, are still there on the hill. Otherwise the City of Harmonia is as if it had never been.

The site of this ghost Utopia is on a side road and a little hard to find. Private roads lead to the two cabins on the old Spiritualist tract. It is delightfully cool there in the woods during a Summer heat wave. The Indians knew the spot long before the Spiritualists heard of the magic spring and brought their ailing there to partake of the healing waters.

Kiantone is an Indian name meaning "planted fields." Locally it is accented on the final syllable. In the region archeologists have found traces of an ancient town of the Eries, "The People of the Cat" who were annihilated by the Seneca Indians in the 17th Century. Kiantone adjoins the reserve granted the Seneca chief, Cornplanter, after the Revolution. When the white settlers came to the region early in the 19th Century, they retained the old Indian name of Kiantone for a township, a hamlet, a stream and a valley.

Modern Spiritualism, born of the Fox Sisters' "rappings" at Newark, N. Y. in 1848, attracted several immediate converts in the Kiantone area. There's a story that two of them, the wife and daughter of John Chase, the blacksmith, went into a trance and emerged with the revelation that, before Columbus, the valley was inhabited by a highly cultivated and wealthy people, the Kiantonians. That tale perhaps led to the treasure hunt at the springs a decade later.

Two other Spiritualists of Kiantone were exceedingly prac-

tical. Oliver Chase and William Brittingham around 1851 or 1852 began to exploit the medicinal properties of the mineral spring. They advertised widely. Any one who sent them $2 and a lock of his or her hair would receive a bottle of the healing water, generously mixed with muddy sediment.

Thaddeus S. Sheldon, Randolph business man and an early convert to Spiritualism, a man destined to play a major role in the fortunes of the Utopian colony at Kiantone, took samples of the water to New York for analysis. There he met a Doctor Greaves of Milwaukee who was so interested that he stopped off to visit the spring on his way West. Doctor Greaves wrote of his findings in a Spiritualist journal in 1853.

His report came to the attention of John Murray Spear and led to that mystic's dream of a new world order and the founding of the City of Harmonia.

Spear was a New Englander. In 1828, at the age of 24, he was a Unitarian minister. He became an ardent abolitionist, a disciple of William Lloyd Garrison. Spear's sympathy for the slaves cost him his pastorate and once he was beaten by a mob in Portland.

He also championed the cause of prison reform with the zeal of a crusader. Associated with him in this work were Wendell Phillips, Edward Everett and Horace Mann. He published a paper called the Prisoner's Friend and in 1851–52 traveled 8,000 miles and raised $10,000 bail for prisoners in his campaign for better conditions in prisons.

John Murray Spear was a sincere humanitarian. There was nothing mercenary about this New England mystic who heard voices and saw visions. It was logical that he should in 1851 become a Spiritualist medium.

Then in 1853, the same year that Doctor Greaves published his account of the magic spring of Kiantone, Spear

burst into print with his revelations. The Association of Beneficents, a band of spirits all bearing famous names, had chosen him as its mouthpiece and revealed to him a model social state.

The directorate of the Association included such notables as Benjamin Franklin, Socrates, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, John Adams, Lafayette, Martin Luther, Swedenborg and others. From their celestial heights, they had handed down to John Murray Spear, their earthly scribe, a charter for the model city of Harmonia, which would:

1. End commercial competition.
2. Abolish all forms of oppression.
3. Abolish war.
4. Unite the sexes so that love would be universal.
5. Educate man to command the elements.
6. Promote study of the finer arts and of the useful inventions.

In this Socialistic Utopia there would be complete freedom of opinion and conduct. The outcast, the oppressed and the homeless would be sheltered. Profits would be limited and all transactions would be in cash. Women would have their proper place in the affairs of the world. The colony would be without earthly government, officers or laws.

However, the setup of the heavenly government, as revealed to its scribe Spear, was a rather elaborate one. Franklin was the head of the General Spirit Assembly. The spirit control was under several divisions. An Association of Agriculturizers would develop new techniques of farming through revelations from heavenly experts. Business would be han-

dled by the Association of Philanthropic Commercialists. The Equalizers would see that justice prevailed, under the guidance of the shades of Socrates, Roger Williams, Martin Luther, Daniel Webster and John Quincy Adams. The Governmentizers would see that the people were free to follow their own pursuits without compulsion. One plank in the Spear platform called for union of the United States and the Dominion of Canada. The Educationizers, led by Aristotle, Plato and Jefferson, would evolve a new and free system of education, including a new style of architecture.

The site of the model colony must have "a salubrious and spiritualizing atmosphere, a soil rich in mineral and agricultural resources and waters favorable for remedial cosmetics and topography adapted to ornamental arrangement."

The vale of Kiantone, with its mineral spring, fitted the bill. So 173 wooded acres were purchased on the New York-Pennsylvania line.

Associated with Spear in the enterprise were such well-to-do gentlemen as Sheldon of Randolph, who became earthly manager of the Philanthropic Commercialists; Horace Fenton, a member of the Chautauqua County family which produced Reuben E. Fenton, a governor and senator from New York, and J. M. Sterling of Cleveland, Ohio.

After the site was dedicated in 1853, the wooden "round houses" were built, each on a stone foundation. They varied in diameter from 16 to 30 feet. Each was about six feet high, with openings at intervals along its sides.

The highspot of this Utopia was the national Spiritualist convention held there in August, 1858. Thousands came from far and near. Big city newspapers sent correspondents. Horace Greeley, interested in all "isms," sent a reporter and his New York Tribune carried a long account of the pro-

ceedings. Hostile spectators howled down some of the speakers, notably a pretty young woman from Cattaraugus who went into a trance, marked by many contortions of her rather voluptuous body, and loudly proclaimed "Free Love is God's Law." Another woman, a Mrs. Britt, calmed the tumult with a sensible speech.

It was in 1858 that the band, following a revelation that the tract housed the buried treasure of a prehistoric, web-footed race, dug that strange tunnel into the hill. There is a legend that the Spiritualists, clad in long white robes, started their digging each midnight by the light of flaming torches. The cave goes back some 150 feet into the bluff, in the form of a stairway, with steps wide enough for two people to walk side by side. The followers of John Murray Spear found no treasure to put into the velvet-lined box they had readied for that purpose. They did come upon a fresh water spring.

Gerald G. Staples, clerk of the Jamestown City Court, whose cabin stands over the opening to the cave, has done considerable excavating there. After digging back 50 feet, he was halted by the water level of the hidden spring. He found a massive plank door guarding the passageway and the tunnel lined with well preserved logs. Staples walled off the tunnel entrance. He also placed a roof over the mineral spring, which bears a sign, "Spiritual Spring."

Little has been recorded of the daily life of that strange colony in its heyday from 1853 to 1858, other than it incurred the hostility and suspicion of its orthodox neighbors in the valley.

A fantastic experiment in the band's search for perpetual motion aroused the countryside. A spiritual sub group, the Electricizers, headed by Ben Franklin, with the ubiquitous Thad Sheldon as its earthly agent, built a mysterious machine

and stationed it on a high rock. It was to be "a living organism, quickened by an indwelling spiritual principle."

There a matron of the cult, according to a contemporary account, "endured the pangs of child birth for two hours and breathed life into the metallic framework, which absorbed elements of her spiritual being." The experiment must have been abandoned, as the machine was moved to Sheldon's barn in Randolph. One night outraged villagers broke in and smashed the perpetual motion machine beyond repair.

Rumors of free love practices in the model city spread throughout the countryside. That stigma, along with internal dissension, hastened the doom of the City of Harmonia. The Spiritualists maintained a school in the grove until the start of the Civil War. After that the dream city gradually sank into oblivion.

But just as the star of Harmonia on the Kiantone was fading, Spear and some of his lieutenants were following a new will of the wisp. In December of 1859 seven of the faithful boarded the steamer Cleopatra at Oil City, Pa., and took the ship down the narrow Allegheny River to Pittsburgh. They were spreading the Gospel of a new Utopian scheme under a new name, the Sacred Order of Unionists. They planned a great world federation with a system of co-operative international commerce, a new universal religion and equality for women.

The Cleopatra steamed through Ohio River waters, docked briefly at Cincinnati, then went on to Patriot, Ind., where an attempt at colonization was started. The group bought 73 acres there, called the new colony Mount Alpheus and planted a vineyard. By July 1, 1860 the Cleopatra was back at Cincinnati. In 1863 John Murray Spear went to England and the Sacred Order of Unionists was dissolved.

Meanwhile the faithful J. M. Sterling had bought the site of the City of Harmonia and deeded it in trust to a board of trustees to administer as long as it was used "for educational and healing purposes." In 1880 the tract was abandoned completely and title reverted to the Sterling heirs.

A half mile up the road from the lost city, over the state line in Pennsylvania and on the family farm where he was born, lives William E. Sturtevant, lean and wiry and in his seventies. He's back on the home acres now after several years in the Southwest. He recalls that when he was a boy a school was held at the Spiritualist site in some legal move to reclaim the land from the Sterling heirs.

Will Sturtevant said that in later years cattle roamed the site of the dream city. They rooted around and pushed over the wooden buildings, weakened by decay and neglect. By 1910 or earlier all of the "temples" were gone.

Mrs. Ruth Anderson and her son, Robert, of Jamestown, have a Summer cabin, built in 1938, on the site of the last of the Spiritualist buildings. Mrs. Anderson calls her sylvan summer retreat "Our Domain." She has a mimeographed booklet which contains about all that has been written about the lost city. Much of that lore came from the research of William S. Bailey of Jamestown.

One of the region's most famous sons also has a deep interest in the story of the lost Harmonia. He is Associate Justice Robert Houghwout Jackson of the United States Supreme Court. But down in his native hills they don't call him "Mr. Justice Jackson." He is plain "Bob" Jackson there.

He was born in Spring Creek, Warren County, a few miles across the border, in Pennsylvania. The Fairbanks farm of his grandfather, also named Robert Jackson, adjoined the site of Harmonia and as a boy, Bob Jackson, going after his grand-

sire's cattle, often saw the ruins of the lost city. That same grandfather, in the waning days of the Spiritualist colony, became alarmed at some of the goings-on in the glade and asked a minister to hold meetings in the neighborhood to offset the evil conditions at the Springs.

Justice Jackson's maternal grandparents, the Houghwouts, also lived in the area. The jurist's youth was spent in nearby Frewsburg, N. Y., where as Will Sturtevant recalls, "his father, Bill Jackson, ran the livery stable and hotel."

Just as both Pennsylvania and New York State are in Justice Jackson's blood, so do both states figure in the bizarre story of the lost City of Harmonia, through which the state line ran. So, despite the sub-title on the jacket of this book, this chapter is not strictly a "Tale of York State."

Chapter 17

The City That Never Was

This is the story of a city that never was and of a dream that only partly came true.

The father of the dream city was Nicholas Devereaux, owner of many Southern Tier acres, who more than a century ago envisioned a city on the banks of the Allegheny River that would be "the intellectual, cultural, industrial and mercantile hub of the East."

In the center of this place which was to be named Allegany City was to be an institution of higher learning.

That part of the dream was fulfilled. For today, on the site of Nicholas Devereaux's dream city, three miles west of the city of Olean in southeastern Cattaraugus County, close to the Pennsylvania border, St. Bonaventure University, largest college of the Franciscan order in the United States, nestles in a bowl of picturesque hills beside the stream known to the Indians as the Allegheny or "long river."

But there is no Allegany City. There never was, except on paper.

It was in 1835 that Devereaux, a resident of Utica and a devout Roman Catholic, bought from the Holland Land Company some half million acres in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties. Thick woods covered the mighty hills and the deep valleys and settlements were few and far between.

But a new day was dawning for the stunted backwoods of the Devereaux Purchase. Little by little, the tracks of the

trail-blazing Erie Railroad were being pushed westward over the formidable hills of the Southern Tier, to link the seaboard with the Great Lakes. And the survey ran through the Devereaux holdings.

In the Genesee Country, at the same time another ambitious enterprise was taking form, the digging of a Genesee Valley Canal to link the Erie Canal at Rochester with the Allegheny River.

In 1836 Devereaux and his associates of the Allegany City Company confidently laid out their metropolis. They chose 300 acres of Devereaux land through which the new railroad was supposed to run and where the new canal was supposed to join the Allegheny River, the gateway to the markets of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

At the same time extensive improvement of the Allegheny River was projected and that was an important factor in the schemes of the promoters of a college town which also would be a center of trade and transport.

They took into consideration also the rich natural resources of the surrounding area. All around were the vast forests of uncut pine and hemlock. They visioned foundries, woolen and cotton mills and other industries, with the rushing streams of the hill country to provide the power. With the clearing of the land, agriculture and dairying would flourish. (That part of the dream was realized, but Allegany City never became the center of the rich agricultural hinterland.)

And the pioneers never even dreamed of the richest treasure of all, the liquid gold which lay hidden beneath the rocky terrain and which would one day make Olean for a time a boom town of the Oil Country.

Father Irenaeus Herscher, O.F.M., the historically-minded librarian of St. Bonaventure, has copies of old maps which

show the lavishness of the plans for Allegany City. On the maps the streets are laid out in neat lines, with the Erie Railroad piercing the heart of the town. The largest plots are those labeled "Franciscan" and "college lands."

Devereaux already had completed a hotel, palatial for the times, opposite the railroad station when his paper city began to crumple.

For when work was resumed in 1848 on the often-halted building of the Erie Railroad, a new survey was made. It swung the tracks a half mile north of Allegany City. The Genesee Valley Canal, which was not completed until 1856 and which 18 years later was abandoned as a failure, terminated at Mill Grove on the outskirts of Olean and never reached the Allegheny. The plans for improving the Allegheny waterway never materialized.

So the paper city faded into an iridescent dream. Within the last decade the hotel that Devereaux built, which for a time bore his name and later was renamed the Park Hotel, was dismantled and its lumber used for a residence in nearby oil-opulent Bradford, Pa. With it passed the last vestige of "the commercial hub of the East."

About a mile west of the site of the dream city is the village of Allegany, called Burton until 1851. It is on both the Erie and Pennsylvania Railroads. It is a pleasant community of some 1,500 but it is by no means the great Allegany City of Nicholas Devereaux's dreams.

But the college of the Franciscans did rise on the banks of the Allegheny just as he had planned. And that was largely due to the energy, the persistence and the devotion to his church that animated Nicholas Devereaux—and indirectly to the coming of the Iron Horse to the Southern Tier.

* * *

The construction of the Erie Railroad brought many Catholic workmen, most of them fresh from Ireland, to the Devereaux Purchase. There were few churches or priests of that faith in the region and Devereaux sought to provide spiritual care for the newcomers.

Father Herscher has unearthed an old letter which relates that "as a thanksgiving for the conversion of his wife, Nicholas E. Devereaux asked permission to establish a branch of the Franciscans and received that permission from the Pope."

In that undertaking the land owner had the valuable and unswerving assistance of the Most Rev. John Timon, first Bishop of Buffalo. Bishop Timon accompanied Devereaux to the Vatican where he applied for Franciscan missionaries to be sent to Western New York to minister, to teach and preach. Devereaux offered $5,000 and 200 acres of land for the purpose.

Volunteers came from three Franciscan schools in Italy. They were Father Pamphilus Da Magliano, revered as "Father Pamphilo," founder and first president of St. Bonaventure College; Father Sixtus Da Gagliano, Father Samuel Da Prezza and Brother Salvatore De Maranola.

It is significant that the Franciscans were chosen to bear the Cross into the backwoods of Cattaraugus County in the middle years of the 19th Century. For the black robed sons of St. Francis had been pioneer missionaries in Western New York when it was still Indian country.

One of them, Father Joseph de La Roche D'Allion, came to the Niagara region in 1626 and was likely the first white man to marvel at the splendor of the Falls, as well as the first to proclaim the presence of petroleum in America. Another Franciscan, the famous Father Louis Hennepin, was an early missionary to the region and the first to write about the

glory of Niagara Falls and to make a sketch of the "thunder waters" from the point that still bears his name.

In June, 1855, the four Brown Robes from Italy arrived in the village of Ellicottville, then the shire town of Cattaraugus County and the headquarters of the Devereaux Land Company. John Devereaux, a son of the proprietor, provided a home for them.

With the arrival of more friars from abroad, the little community of Franciscans, first in the Eastern United States, began its labors in a converted school house purchased by Nicholas Devereaux. It served as monastery, chapel and school. There were in the beginning the three professors and three students.

In addition to their teaching duties, the priests ministered to the spiritual needs of the men who were building the railroad and the other Catholic immigrants in the countryside.

In the Spring of 1859 the school moved to a new monastery which had been built on the site of Allegany City beside the winding Allegheny River. That building stood for 70 years, until flames gutted it in 1930. The school had a student body of 15 in 1859. Such were the beginnings of St. Bonaventure University, which today numbers its students by the hundreds and its graduates by the thousands.

A young man who spent three years at St. Bonaventure wrote in 1950 one of the most popular books of recent times. His name is Thomas Merton and his book is "The Seven Storey Mountain." In it he makes many references to the Franciscan college amid the foothills where always his troubled spirit found surcease.

Nicholas Devereaux's proud city never rose beside the Allegheny but in the college of the friars on its site that pioneer's dream came true in a splendid way.

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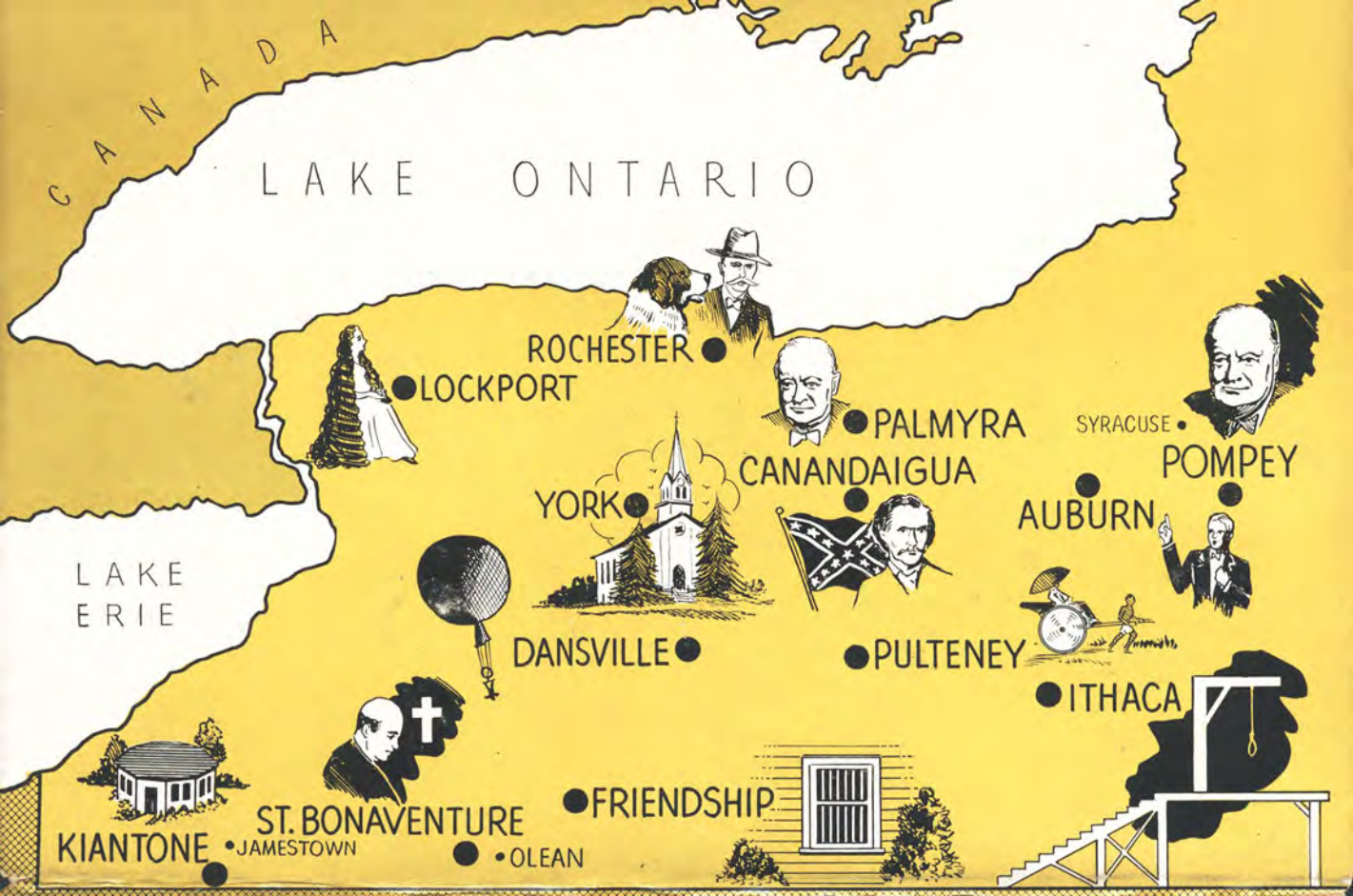
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